ON THE HILLS WITH OUR LORD

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On the Hills with Our Lord

REFLECTIONS FOR THE HOLY HOUR

BY THE

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Author of "Under the Sanctuary Lamp,"
"The Fountains of the Saviour"

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To His Eminence

JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS

YOUR EMINENCE:

To be permitted to associate with my small volume the name of one deservedly so distinguished is an honor and a privilege. On Your Eminence's part it is a gracious, but not unexpected, condescension. Many acts of kindness in the past when for years I lived under your gentle rule, and especially my ordination twenty-five years ago, have been received at your hands. These pages, unworthy though they are, Your Eminence has kindly consented to accept as a small token of gratitude. The subject treated, the mysteries of our Lord's life, having been interwoven with your daily thoughts from childhood will, I trust, be acceptable.

I am, my dear Lord Cardinal,

Sincerely yours,

JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

November 6, 1914.

PREFACE

These pages are a continuation of papers written monthly in a very busy life for "The Messenger of the Sacred Heart." The kind and surprising reception accorded to my two former small volumes gives ground to hope that this may be equally acceptable and profitable to souls.

The treatment of the various mysteries is not intended to be deep or recondite, still less novel and unusual. The simple thoughts presented are for those especially who love to linger prayerfully on the mysteries of the Gospel narrative during the Holy Hour with a view to the profit of their souls and daily lives.

It is with pleasure that I add my thanks to my very dear friends, Fathers Joseph H. Smith and J. Harding Fisher, who have carefully revised these pages, and seen them through the press.

JOHN H. O'ROURKE, S.J.

KOHLMANN HALL, N. Y.

CONTENTS

The Hills of Cana 1
The Hill of the Temple 11
The Hill of Discussion 23
The Hills of Bethany 35
The Hills of the Jordan 48
The Hills of Bersabee 59
The Hills of Samaria 71
The Hill of Comfort 82
The Hills of Rejection 92
The Hills of Plenty 103
The Hill of Invitation 113
The Hill of Pleading 122
The Hill of Kindness 133
The Inland Hills 144
The Hill of Retirement 157
The Hills of Capharnaum 170

THE HILLS OF CANA

THE forty days of fasting in the desert are over. Our Lord has taught us by His example that prayer and penance are a necessary schooling in the active work for souls. Upon the banks of the Jordan the Baptist has pointed Him out to his disciples as "the Lamb of God." With His lately chosen followers He starts for Cana in Galilee to hallow by His presence the innocent festivities of a marriage feast.

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited and His disciples to the marriage." The sun is quickly hurrying back of Carmel, rich with remembrances of Elias, when our Lord, on the evening of the third day, meets His mother at Cana. More than forty days have come and gone since He bade her farewell at Nazareth. He had left the home of His silent, prayerful years and, as far as we know, never entered it again. Those days must have been lonely ones for Mary. They must have been like the lengthening of the dark shadows of the three days' loss so long ago, when she and Joseph

sought Him sorrowing in the crowded streets of the Holy City. But she had willingly made the sacrifice. True love, like Mary's, does not consist in selfish clinging to those we love when God calls them elsewhere. Basking in the sunshine of their presence is rather love of self than of them or of our Blessed Saviour. The truer love consists in that generous obedience to the call of God that requires absence and separation.

The spacious dining-room, brilliantly lighted with lamps and torches, is already filled with the many guests invited to the marriage. In the midst of the innocent joy and merriment of the feast the mother of Jesus said to Him: "They have no wine." With a watchfulness and delicacy for even the most sensitive feelings, ever characteristic of our Lady, she noticed that the wine was giving out. She would prevent anything on such an occasion that could mar the happiness of the newly married couple, or lessen the pleasure of the guests. Turning, then, to her Son and confidently whispering "They have no wine," she drew from Him before His time had come "the beginning of miracles."

Long years ago the first internal miracle of grace was wrought in the soul of the Baptist

at the sound of our Lady's voice. "And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary the infant leaped in her womb." It was through her that the shackles of sin which bound the soul of St. John were stricken off. It was through her, His handmaid, that He fulfilled His mercy in the soul of His holy Forerunner. Now that His public career is about to open, the life of signs and wonders, the first external showing forth of His power and compassion will be in response to the request of His Blessed Mother. Her pleading will set in motion the long series of graces and blessings which in the three years to come are to bring relief to ailing bodies and afford comfort to broken hearts.

"They have no wine." How beautiful the prayer and how consoling! Mary does not ask for the wonder and the sign. She only lays bare the need. She has lived thirty years in intimate union with the Sacred Heart in the hillside home at Nazareth and knows full well the tenderness of her Son's affection. If no prayer has ever gone up from earth to Heaven and remained unanswered, surely Mary's pleading will be heard. And so it was, and with a fulness beyond all expectation, for His mother said to the waiters: "Whatsoever He

shall say to you, do ye." How consoling, too, the prayer, "They have no wine." If the Heavenly Father, who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, were to forget us; if our Divine Redeemer, who held up His outstretched bleeding hands for our healing, were to be unmindful of us, we still have Mary our Mother to plead through her Son to the Father. As of old she said, "They have no wine," so now she will pray for us: "They are tired and weary in the struggle, their burden is heavy and their hearts are lonely and sad, their trials are many and their temptations frequent and strong." Can we doubt, without doubting the miracle of Cana itself, that our Mother's pleading for us will be heard?

"Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." These words to so gentle a mother by so loving a Son seem at first harsh and lacking the tenderness characteristic of our Blessed Saviour. The difficulty comes, perhaps, from the difference of idiom and from association. The word "woman," for example, could be used to the noblest ladies and in the most loving moments. One well-known writer thus interprets the text: "What are you doing, mother, in asking Me for such

an inopportune manifestation of My power? The divinely appointed time for that has not yet come." From this it is clear that it is to our Lady's intercession that the miracle is due. It was the power of her prayer which caused the Sacred Heart to anticipate "the beginning of miracles." The wonder wrought and the anticipation of the time were a proof of His tender love for her. What affection would have been seen in His eyes, what kindness in His tone, and gentleness in His manner, that would make the phrase expressive of respect, courtesy, and love! Mary surely saw no harshness, and showed no undiminished faith and trust, for, turning to the servants, she said: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

"Jesus saith to them: 'Fill the water-pots with water.'" The servants had scarcely filled the jars with water when a singular and unexpected wonder took place. The clear water was changed into wine. "The conscious water saw its God and blushed." The same power that ripens the grape on the hillside vineyards, and under the sunshine sweetens its juice, did in an instant what, through the hot months of summer and the early autumn, He does by His natural laws. Thus it was that our Blessed

Lord, to relieve the embarrassment of His hosts, to prevent any diminution of the innocent gayety of the feast, and, above all, to emphasize the power of His Mother's prayer, anticipated the time of "the beginning of miracles" and wrought this marvel of kindness and charity.

How strongly this exercise of divine power brings out the compassion and tenderness of the Heart of our Blessed Saviour! Only a short week before, at the end of His tarrying on the bleak, rocky heights overlooking the Dead Sea, at the end of His long forty days of prayer and fasting. He had felt the pangs of hunger and the natural craving for food. At that time the tempter coming said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Who answered and said: "It is written: 'Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.'" He who, to appease His own hunger, would not change the stones of the wilderness into bread, who would rather hunger and thirst than exercise His transforming power for His own relief, does not hesitate, in order to prevent the embarrassment of a simple, country, wedded couple, to bring into play the power of His

Divinity. In days of old in Egypt the first miracle of Moses was to turn the river of a guilty nation into blood; the first display of our Blessed Saviour's wonder-working was to change the water into wine at a humble wedding. So true is it that there is no least detail of our lives, no smallest circumstance affecting our welfare, in which we have not the sympathy of the Sacred Heart of Christ.

We might linger with profit over another lesson which flows out from this beautiful miracle we are contemplating. Can we not say with truth that our Blessed Saviour by His action here gives His sanction to that spirit of joy which ought to mark our lives in His service? St. Paul it is who bids us "rejoice in the Lord." And Isaias tells us: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." Our Lord that evening in Cana, at the request of His Mother, exercises His divine power that no shadow of sadness may mar the joy of the innocent merriment and gayety of this marriage feast. All healthy piety, all generous service of our Master is to be one of gladness. Gloom, sadness, and a tiresome seriousness are no more traits of true devotion, no more marks of a true, spiritual life, than are undue lightness and un-

seemly levity. A seriousness that repels and a morbidness that depresses, are not consonant with the service of a Master who has said: "Take My yoke upon you . . . for My yoke is sweet and My burden light." Yokes that are sweet and burdens that are light do not cause wry and long faces and saddened hearts.

Daily at the foot of the altar the priest exclaims: "I will go unto the altar of God, to God who rejoiceth my youth." There is no higher act of worship, no greater act of service, no sublimer act of religion; yet the very first words of the Great Sacrifice inculcate a spirit of joy. The priest's sorrows may be many, his burdens may be heavy, his disappointments keen, in the eyes of men his career may be a failure and old age may creep upon him and find his hopes shattered and his strength gone, yet every morning he goes to the altar to have his soul rejoiced and his youth renewed.

It is the same, too, in the life of each and every one of the faithful. The daily changing of the wine into the Blood of Christ, at which they can be present, the daily breaking of the Bread on the altar, this daily dining with Christ at the dawn, must renew their spiritual

"They have no wine"

vigor and rejoice their souls. Storms may sweep over their spirits, trials may come into their lives, and dark shadows thicken about their firesides, death will sooner or later enter in and steal away those they love. What matters it if they can daily go to Him who rejoiceth their youth from the Tabernacle? We have the words of St. Peter to console us: "Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must for a little time be made sorrowful in divers temptations; that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

This is a lesson we can learn from the action of our Blessed Saviour at Cana when He gives His sanction to an innocent mirth and sinless merriment. We may be sure that His approval rests upon that service which is given willingly and cheerfully, rather than upon a practice of piety which by its gloom and unattractive sternness repels. Joy in the spiritual life widens and expands the heart; sadness narrows and contracts. The sunshine, too, which goes forth from the cheerful soul attracts and warms, while a severe and forbidding austerity makes Christ's yoke onerous and

depressing. Our joy is not unrestrained, but well under control. Clipped and cut back by self-mastery, it strikes deeper roots and expands into a fuller, holier praise, and like brave soldiers on forced marches, we sing by the way: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord."

THE HILL OF THE TEMPLE

AFTER the miracle at Cana, our Lord and His disciples went over to Capharnaum by the Sea, but "they remained there not many days." For "the Pasch of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." No doubt, as vast throngs were flocking to the annual festival, our Lord and His disciples would join the pious pilgrims who were joyfully making their way to the Holy City.

Eighteen years had come and gone since our Blessed Saviour had first been present at the festival of the Passover; there is no mention in Holy Writ of His having attended the celebration of the Pasch during those years when He had remained in quiet and obscurity at Nazareth and "was subject" to Mary and Joseph. Active years these were in their apparent inactivity, for during their silent flow towards eternity He brought about in that holy home the dazzling sanctity of His Mother and foster-father. But He had now left the seclusion of Nazareth for good, and was about to manifest Himself to priests and people as the Messias, verifying the words of the prophet: "And presently the Lord, whom you

seek, and the angel whom you desire, shall come to His Temple."

The recollection of that first pilgrimage, eighteen years ago, with Mary and Joseph, will naturally recur to our Lord's mind, as with His disciples and the other pious Jews He journeys over the level plain of Esdraelon—a battle-ground teeming with memories of His people from their earliest days. On then they will move devoutly through Samaria and Judæa, recalling the history of their nation, recounting the deeds of their ancestors, chanting the psalms and practising other holy devotions, until they hail with joy the sight of the sacred Temple in the distance.

Arrived at the Holy City, "He found in the Temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money sitting." Trafficking in the streets adjacent to the Temple was not only a convenience during the period of the festival, but also a necessity. At that time the Jews flocked from all parts of the world and assembled in great numbers for the solemnities. They brought with them the coin of the country whence they came. This had to be changed for money lawful as a religious offering. The foreign coin, especially that stamped and defiled with heathen images

and symbols, was utterly repugnant to the Jewish feelings and unacceptable in the Temple. Then, too, oxen, sheep, doves—the offerings of the poor—flour, oil and other requisites for the sacrifices and services of the Law had to be so located that they could be procured easily by the pious pilgrims and devout worshipers. For centuries all these had been sold outside the sacred precincts, but little by little the vendors, urged by a spirit of competition and greed and with the connivance of the Priests, had gradually encroached upon the holy enclosure, until they were within the Temple limits, within the Court of the Gentiles, the outer Court of the house of prayer.

During the days of the Passover our Blessed Saviour wrought many wondrous deeds. For Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, said to Him: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a Teacher from God, but no man can do these signs which Thou dost, unless God be with him." But the greatest wonder done by our Blessed Saviour during these days was the cleansing and purification of His "Father's House," and the defense of the sacredness of His Holy Temple.

It surely was a strange and shocking sight which obtruded itself upon our Lord and His

disciples as they came up that morning for the early sacrifices. To the devout Jew there was no more hallowed spot on earth than Mount Moriah, and no edifice so endeared as the Temple. About it and Mount Moriah clustered the fondest memories and the tenderest affections. Upon that holy mountain Melchisedech had blessed Abram: "Melchisedech, the King of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the Most High God, blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, who created heaven and earth.'" Centuries ago up from Bersabee, through Hebron and Bethlehem, along the old limestone road—perhaps the oldest road in the world—Abraham had come with his son Isaac, the child of promise, to sacrifice him in a spirit of faith and obedience. "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision: and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." This holy mountain was the Hill of the Temple.

David, the glory of Israel, the type of repentance and trophy of forgiving love, had yearned to build the Temple on that holy hill. For he had said: "Lord, I have loved the

beauty of Thy house." To his son Solomon was accorded the privilege. "The Lord said to David, my father: 'Whereas thou hast thought in thy heart to build a house to My name, thou hast done well in having this same thing in thy mind. Nevertheless thou shalt not build Me a house, but thy son . . . he shall build a house to My name.'" So King Solomon built the holy Temple on Mount Moriah: "Then all the ancients of Israel with the princes of the tribes and the heads of the families of the children of Israel were assembled to King Solomon," and into the sacred enclosure they brought the ark of the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary; and "so the king and the children of Israel dedicated the Temple of the Lord." Again, when the Jews were led into exile and captivity, we are told that they sat by the waters of Babylon and wept when they thought of the glories of Sion. Back over the desert and by Mount Nebo and Jericho they went in spirit and in loneliness, and, weeping, they thought of their sacred traditions, of the sacrifices and oblations on the altar and of the memories of Mount Moriah and the hallowed Temple.

How utterly shocking and repulsive this scene of bartering, buying and selling must

have been then even to the ordinary devout Jew! It can surely be no matter of surprise to see our Lord filled with righteous indignation at the profanation of the holy Temple and burning with zeal for its cleansing from such shameful abuses. And so "when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew." When Jacob had spent the night at Bethel in the open under the clear eastern sky, with his head resting upon a stone, he recognized how holy was the spot. "When Jacob awakened out of sleep he said: 'Indeed the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.' And trembling, he said: 'How terrible is this place; this is no other but the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.'" So our Blessed Saviour, by scourging the hucksters and traffickers from the sacred precincts, vindicated the sanctity of His Father's House and condemned the wicked buying and selling which were backed by a corrupt and avaricious priesthood.

"And to them that sold doves He said: 'Take these things hence, and make not the House of My Father a house of traffic.'" Did

they not know that the Holy of Holies, in which the High Priest might enter but once a year, was within the inner Court? Had they forgotten that when Oza stretched forth his arm to save the ark from falling "the indignation of the Lord was enkindled against Oza, and he struck him for his rashness and he died there before the ark"? Surely there was no need to remind them of the days of the Machabees, not so long before, when Heliodorus was punished by the anger of God for attempting to take away the treasures deposited in the Temple. When Baltasar and his drunken guests by drinking from the sacred vessels desecrated them, Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall. He told them: "And this is the writing that is written: Mane, Thecel, Phares! Mane: God hath numbered thy Kingdom, and finished it. Thecel: thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting. Phares: thy Kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians . . . The same night Baltasar the Chaldean King was slain." So our Lord would remind them of the sanctity of God's house and awaken their guilty consciences. Though the usurers, hawkers and Priests may have cursed His zeal, none dared disobey and

resist the indignation and wrath of Him who lashed them down the Temple steps.

If the zeal of our Blessed Saviour for the reverence due His Father's House in the Old Law is so pictured to us in the Gospel, what ought to be our reverence for the sanctity of God's dwelling-place in the New Dispensation? On the day of the dedication of the old Temple "the majesty of the Lord filled the House. Neither could the priests enter into the Temple of the Lord, because the majesty of the Lord had filled the Temple of the Lord." What was the majesty of the Lord that brooded over the Holy of Holies in Israel compared with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords dwelling in our tabernacles? We have no mere type, symbol, or figure of the Most High God, but the eternal, living, loving Reality. In the tabernacle of the Old Law there was the manna which fed the people during their wanderings through the desert till they crossed the Jordan and were nourished upon the yellow corn of Canaan. In our tabernacles is the "Bread that lives and maketh live"; "the Bread from Heaven, prepared without labor," whose price is blood-shedding, "having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste."

The earthly dwelling-places of the Eucharistic Presence are in dignity as much above the Temple on Mount Moriah as eternity is above time, as the Divine is above the human. For on our altars "the chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the Bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?" Every single Mass said either in the arched cathedral or in the lowly mountain chapel, is the realization, in an act of highest worship and tender love, of that cry which welled up from the Heart of Christ on the night before He died: "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." His dying wish, the last craving of His spirit and yearning of His soul, ere He passed out to the blood-sweating in the garden and to the blood-shedding on the cross, was that He should tarry with us in the tabernacle of the altar, in time, so that we could abide within the "heavenly tabernacles" during the ages of eternity.

How dear, then, the Church should be to every truly Catholic heart! Within its holy walls we are cleansed from original sin; "not by the works of justice, which we have done,

but according to His mercy He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Spirit." In God's holy Temple we were first made temples of the Holy Ghost and changed from enemies to friends of the Bridegroom. As the early years began to slip away under the same sacred roof of our churches we were confirmed and anointed, so that we might be prepared for the battles before us, battles not merely against flesh and blood, "but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness; against the spirits of wickedness in high places." In later life, when battle-scarred and wounded, is it not at the feet of the priest in the confessional that our wounds are dressed and our bruises healed? But it is, above all, at the altar that we find our strength and courage. "Great is He that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel," for "there shall be a tabernacle for a shade in the daytime from the heat and for a security and covert from the whirlwind and from rain."

Thus it is in every need of life we can have recourse to the Tabernacle in our churches, and we find how true is His loving invitation spoken long ago on the hills of Galilee, and now spoken daily to us from the hill of the

altar when we are sad and weary: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Men and women often go elsewhere for comfort in their sorrows, and the tears flow only the faster; they go elsewhere for light, and their blindness becomes darker; they go elsewhere for courage, only to lose heart and become cowards; they go elsewhere for strength, only to become weaker and die. In the Tabernacle is He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Upon our altar is He who in the Temple gave sight to the darkened eyes of the man blind from his birth. The Tabernacle contains Him whom heaven and earth can not contain and whose sanctity dazzles even the strong vision of angels and archangels. This is what makes our churches objects of reverence and love in our lives. It is the guest dwelling within the sanctuary that makes our gorgeous cathedral or the mud or log cabin chapel in the jungles of India or on the banks of the Yukon unspeakably holy to the Catholic mind and the Catholic heart.

And when life's fitful dream is over and our short day's work is done, when dimming eyes and failing strength warn us that our day is ending and the shadows of evening are gathering about, once more the Temple will play its

part in our few remaining moments. We went to the Blessed Master when we could, we were glad to kneel at His altar-rail and linger under the light of the sanctuary lamp; and so at the end when we can no longer go to Him the tabernacle-door opens for us the last time and He comes once more into the temple of our hearts to judge us in mercy, in tenderness and in love.

THE HILL OF DISCUSSION

AMONG those who heard the whiz of the lash and saw the anger and indignation in Christ's flashing eyes the day He cast the buyers and sellers out from the precincts of the Temple, there was one who did not join the Priests and Pharisees in objecting to what seemed to them an unwarranted assumption of authority and an unjustifiable display of zeal; there was one who was sadly puzzled by the events he had witnessed. No ordinary Jew was he, but a member of the Sanhedrin and a remarkable teacher of the Law. He was "a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

For years Nicodemus had watched with regret the increasing disrespect for God's house. At every festival the growth of avarice in the lives of the Priests and the buyers and sellers painfully forced itself upon his notice. Many a time his mind wandered back to the days of the glory of the first Temple and to the sanctity of the priesthood in far-off years. Often his spirit must have dwelt on the promises of old: "And I will raise up a faithful priest, who shall do according to My heart and My

soul; and I will build him a faithful house, and he shall walk all days before my Anointed." Perhaps, too, he remembered that King Joas called Joiada the High Priest and the Priests, and said to them: "Why do you not repair the Temple? Take you therefore money no more according to your order; but restore it therefore for the repairing of the Temple."

At all events the action of our Lord stirred to life in the heart of Nicodemus some dying sparks of faith. For he went to Jesus by night, and said to Him: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which Thou dost, unless God be with him." The cleansing of the Temple, the preaching during the days of the festival, and the miracles had all worked upon this pious Jew and had thus drawn him timidly to the feet of our Blessed Saviour. Our Lord often deals with us as He did with Nicodemus. At times we are far from Him, and like the prodigal we wander into a distant country. Yet what miracles of love He works to bring us back! The flowers which perfume the air, and the stars that stud the blue velvet of the skies are not so numerous as His graces and His calls. Sometimes His warnings seem

to come by chance, while we are at prayer, or it may be when prayer is farthest from our thoughts. Shadows that creep over our lives and joys that cause smiles to ripple over our lips are often graces beckoning us on to Him. How happy if we follow even as the timid Nicodemus!

Where did the timid Pharisee meet the Master? Was our Lord tarrying in Jerusalem at some friend's house to which Nicodemus under the full light of the Paschal moon would silently and cautiously turn his footsteps? Upon this subject St. John is silent. Perhaps our Lord was spending the night in a tent on the Mount of Olives, as thousands of pilgrims did during the Passover. If so, His thoughts turned, no doubt, to the coming months and years of His public life. The silent nights of prayer, the tears shed over Jerusalem, the frequent and loving hospitality of Lazarus and his sisters at Bethany, these and other events in the near future stood out clearly before His mind that night.

Whilst at prayer He hears the cautious approach of an almost noiseless footfall and the crackling perhaps of a breaking twig; quietly the flap of His tent sways, is opened, and the timid Nicodemus enters, nervous and pale for

fear of detection. Poor Nicodemus is timid to-night, but the day will come when he will be brave and openly profess His faith in His Divine Master. The midnight conversation on the slopes of Olivet will bear full fruit. True, the fruit is at present far from ripe, but when the Master who is now teaching him so lovingly, has hung upon the cross and with outstretched arms has died, the timid disciple will come with gifts for His burial. "And Nicodemus also came (he who at first came to Jesus by night) bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pound weight."

How many of us in our lives are like Nicodemus! How many of us are timid and fearful! We fear the penance and mortification necessary to get close to that Blessed Saviour. As a consequence we live from day to day lives of enervating ease and self-indulgence. Often deep down in our hearts there is the attraction for spiritual reading, for prayer, for Holy Communion; here again we are cowards and will not make the effort. The world and its vanities, its fashions and its silly, if not sinful, customs, its pleasures and its softness, all appeal to us; we feel a voice within whispering to us of Calvary and its sufferings;

but we will not listen, we turn a deaf ear, while the merry music and the dance, perhaps of death, goes on. We know that our children should go to Catholic schools, our home should have a Catholic atmosphere, our lives a Catholic tone; but we are timid and afraid and try to compromise. Perhaps in His love our Lord will bring us to the foot of the cross by allowing the dark shadows of Calvary to enter into our own souls. Perhaps in His mercy He will allow death, sickness or failure to stalk over our household, and so bring us to realize the vanity of it all, and to kneel at last under Mary's blue mantle on the hill of pardon and of love.

We can not examine in detail the conversation between our Blessed Saviour and Nicodemus. In the Gospel narrative of the scene there is abundant food for mind and heart, if we linger over it before the Tabernacle. One or two features of the interview may be emphasized with profit to our own souls.

To reach the Kingdom of God, our Lord prescribes that we "be born of water and the Holy Ghost." It was not enough for the crowds that followed the Baptist to listen to his call to penance. Nor was it sufficient to join the throngs that flocked from

Judea and Galilee to the Jordan's banks to be baptized by the saintly Precursor. In our Lord's words there is no question of any ceremony of the Old Law, of any rite of the Old Dispensation; to enter into life eternal the Baptism of the New Law, the Baptism made efficacious by the blood-shedding of Calvary, is absolutely required.

Then, too, our Blessed Saviour insists on the necessity for all of the supernatural life, and this must have come not merely as a surprise but even with something of a shock to this "master in Israel." That a Roman or a Greek could not enjoy the privileges of the Covenant without a radical change; that the Bedouin from the Dead Sea fastnesses, the Arab from the desert, the Egyptian from the Nile should have to be transformed spiritually before being admitted into the Kingdom of God, the timid Jew could readily understand and admit; but that he, a descendant from Abraham, a believer in the Law and a partaker of its privileges, a "master in Israel," should have no special rights, no particular claim to the Kingdom—this seemed to him a strange teaching, a new doctrine.

Yet as they sat there in the dimly-lit tent, with the breeze whispering through the olive

groves and murmuring gently up the mountain, our Lord takes occasion to drive home these lessons, needed, not only by Nicodemus, but by every one of us, who like him are striving, perhaps timidly also, towards that which is highest and best. From our Lord's words we can draw out the fact, of which surely we have no doubt, that there are two lives, the one merely natural, the other supernatural.

The natural life we know is the one in which the springs of action do not rise above things of earth and time. It is the life in which our aims, our views, our aspirations, our efforts are influenced, tinged, prompted by motives and objects that are not above the sordid cares and ambitions of this world. Such lives will never win for us the Kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," whispered Christ to Nicodemus. Yet, how far at times, if we are not on our guard, we can fall below even the natural! How easily we are influenced by vanity and pride! How readily selfishness steals into the actions of most of us, corrupting, like a cancer, whatever of good there is in them!

In the homes of many otherwise good people, how little of the supernatural, how much of the world, is obtruded upon us! The

pictures on the walls, the books that strew the parlor table, the amusements sought and enjoyed and permitted, the friends welcomed to the table, the conversations heard, the interest in dress, dissipation, recreations, how far they are from the ideal which is from above, which is of God, which comes of the spiritual! Surely, no one entering such houses and studying their daily customs, habits and routine, would ever dream that the one all-important factor in all lives is faith and religion, not the present world, but the world to come. Yet, without doubt, nothing is of importance in comparison with the supernatural life. This secured, all else is secure; this lost, all else is lost. Our Lord Himself has said: "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel, shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The supernatural life is one in which we habitually keep in the state of God's favor and love, in which we strive daily to grow from grace to grace. In it are found the every-day dull round of duties, the same dead monotony of routine as obtains in the natural and

worldly life. The difference lies in the motive which animates, the aim which prompts to action. The striving for the supernatural is a striving not merely for things of time, but for those of eternity; not merely for what passes away and shrivels up, but for that which lasts and endures. Those who are earnestly endeavoring to lead this life have, like St. Peter, turned to our Blessed Saviour and cried out: "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And step by step they are led on by the "Holy Spirit who breathes where He will" from lower to higher. Like the mind of Nicodemus, our minds grow brighter, and our hearts stronger under His grace. Day by day we fling aside baser ideals and lower motives, and toil, through love of Him who toiled for us, towards the higher and nobler.

This is no easy task, and at times it is hard beyond the telling. In the struggle we are apt to resemble the timid Nicodemus who came to the Master by night. We may know that things are not what they seem. We may realize that earth's joys are only dancing, delusive shadows. We may say that they are changeable, fantastic, dream-like. It may come home to us that life's pleasures are like

the glittering colors of the soap bubble glinting in the sunlight, and we may understand that the day will come when the shining bubble will burst and leave in the hand only a damp spot.

Nevertheless, these poor, sad hearts of ours beat on and are tired and yearn for rest. They are often sore and weary and crave for some human comfort. The struggle is hard and constant. In our distress we almost cry out: "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Hopeless seems the height, helpless our poor puny strivings. Yet how encouraging those other words whispered in the quiet of the tent that night: "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him." Ah! if the Son had not come, if the face of Mary's Child had not by His smile lit up with Heaven's light the dark cave at Bethlehem, if above all that face had never been stained with mud and spittle and with blood; if He had never lived, how hard the struggle and hopeless, how dark the way and long, how weary poor tired hearts and despairing!

But He has come, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with our grief. His efforts and sufferings have won for ours a new power and

an efficacy in struggles. We must remember that it is a law in our Lord's Kingdom that in the work of our own sanctification, as also in works of zeal for our neighbor, we must sow in tears, if we are to reap in joy. As our Lord again said to Nicodemus: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." In our weakness, in our discouragement, in our sorrows and our pain, it is the picture of "the Son of Man lifted up" that must make us strong, give us courage to cling to our ideals in the spiritual life. If we cling to aught else, if we cling to creatures, they will fail us and we shall drift out to sea from our spiritual moorings. "Look on the face of thy Christ," but let it be His face covered with shame, on the cross, and tinged with blood, the face of the Man of Sorrows "lifted up."

Nowhere is the Man of Sorrows "lifted up" as on the hill of the altar. Daily He is "lifted up" for our healing and our strengthening, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert" for the saving of the people. Daily the nail-pierced hands are stretched out towards us, offering welcome; the bruised lips are whispering: "My people, what have I done to thee? or in what have I grieved thee? Answer me."

The best reply we can make is to steal frequently, in the quiet of the dawn, or in the shadows of the evening, to His Tabernacle under the flickering light of the sanctuary lamp. In the sweet stillness that ever reigns about His altar home, we shall find light in darkness, and strength in weakness, as the timid Nicodemus of old, when by night, he cautiously made his way up the hallowed slopes of Olivet to the tent of the weary Master, who welcomed him with kindness and love—as He ever welcomes those who kneel within the shadow of His sanctuary.

THE HILLS OF BETHANY

EARLY in His public life our Lord performed His first miracle at Cana. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee: and He manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him." From Cana He went to the shore of the lake, where He remained a short time: "After this He went down to Capharnaum, He and His Mother, and His brethren and His disciples, and they remained there not many days. And the Pasch of the Jews was at hand: and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." In the Holy City, as we have seen, He cast the buyers and sellers from the Temple, and by night, on the moonlit slopes, perhaps of Olivet, held holy converse with the timid Nicodemus.

After the Paschal solemnities, our Blessed Saviour entered upon the first prolonged period of His apostolic labors; for St. John tells us: "After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He abode with them and baptized." During the spring, then, and summer and on into the winter, our Lord remained in the hill country of Judea, carrying on His sacred ministry;

and only late in December did He return to Galilee through Samaria, converting the Samaritan woman, as we shall see, at the well of Jacob, and lingering two days among the Samaritans in their city.

It is not possible to determine the exact locality in which our Saviour with His disciples conducted this public preaching. In all probability the scene of these spiritual activities was amid the hills and in the mountainous regions of the south of Judea. His return to Galilee obliged Him to pass through the district north of the Holy City on His way to Samaria. Jerusalem is flanked east and west by rugged, wild ravines, through which the waters, on the one side, have dug their way towards the Mediterranean, and on the other out towards the desolate and deserted banks of the Jordan. It is not, therefore, unlikely that these months were spent amid the hills and valleys of the south.

He may have dwelt for a time at Bethany; and Lazarus and Martha may frequently have come out and listened to the strange Rabbi, so different from the Baptist in manner, so strangely like him in teaching. Little did they dream that His voice would one day re-echo in power along the slopes of the mountain side,

and bid that brother arise from death and fling off the graveclothes. But in those days their quiet home, nestling snugly at the foot of Olivet, was sad and silent. Brother and sister spoke in whispers; tears, the pearls of the heart's love, often stood unbidden in their eyes. For theirs was a great sorrow.

Out from the protecting shelter of that home, away from the strong arm of the loving Lazarus, far from the guiding voice and tender embrace of Martha, the younger, erring sister had wandered. They missed the ripple of her joyous laughter, and the brightness of her merry eyes. She had gone forth, to return perhaps never again. She was lost, to be found, for all they knew, no more; dead, never more to see life. How they yearned and prayed for the absent one! Loving arms were open to receive her, hearts were eager to forgive and forget. But what if she did not return to be forgiven! No wonder they could not forget their sorrow. Did our Lord during His stay at Bethany dissipate to some extent the darkness which hung over the spirits of that desolate brother and heartbroken sister? Did He tell them that the prodigal would come back to them, that she who was dead would live again? Did He whisper words of comfort

and promise that before many months had died the absent one would kneel at His feet in Galilee, and that He would pardon their erring sister, that she would come back to them, chastened, forgiven; her stained soul, through His sweet mercy and His grace, as white as the snowy-crested foam on the moonlit shore at midnight. Who can tell? Who can fathom the depths of the tender compassion of our Blessed Saviour's Sacred Heart?

If such sorrows enter Catholic homes—and God grant they may not—the tender and patient love of Lazarus and Martha must not be forgotten. The erring child in thoughtlessness and ignorance may have gone forth from the shelter of a mother's embrace and the guidance of an affectionate father, and she may have wandered far away into a distant land. The blush of shame may mantle the mother's cheek, the father's shoulders may be bent and his steps may totter; they may wish that the child of their pain and sorrow had never brightened the earlier days of their married life; yet if, even after years of absence, she comes back, sin-scarred and stained, there must be one door, besides the door of the church, open to her—the door of the home that she has left. There must be one heart to

love and receive her besides the Sacred Heart of Christ—the broken heart of her own mother.

There is perhaps another home in Bethany which sorrow haunts, and in which sadness and loneliness dwell, the house of Simon the leper. From that family the father has gone forth an outcast, and legally he can never return. How pathetic the story! Simon, with his young and beautiful dark-eyed bride, lived in peaceful Bethany. Many a time and oft on their way to the Temple, they climbed the winding road that stretches like a white ribbon over the Mount of Olives. Frequently at evening, as the shadows of the olive trees began to lengthen out towards the Jordan, he pointed out to her the scenes in the valley, where brave deeds of valor were wrought by the heroes of their people. And so the happy days sped away, with no cloud to darken their bright sunshine. To that happy home as the years rolled on children came, and the mutual love and happiness of the young couple increased. Few were the tears they shed; seldom a sigh crossed their laughing lips. But an hour came when all was changed. Simon felt the fever in his blood, his mouth was parched, his brow warm and his hands hot

and dry. He noticed small pimples and blotches on his arms. For an instant his heart stood still, frozen by fear. Oh! it could not be. Impossible! The God of his people loved him, and his fair wife and his innocent little ones. Let him banish the foul thought, the sickening suspicion. He a leper! Oh! the sadness of it! And dark despair brooded over his crushed heart.

At last the Jewish Priest came and pronounced him cursed; declared him a leper. Out from his happy fireside, away from wife and children, must he go. To the rugged arid hills that overhang the Dead Sea is he banished, a wanderer and an outcast, who may not cool his fevered lips with the clear water that flows by the haunts of men. Like a hunted animal in the barren hills, he flees at the sound of human feet, wildly shrieking in warning: "Unclean! unclean!" Alas, in his lonely suffering, poor Simon had not yet heard of the Prophet of Galilee, at whose touch even the scales of leprosy would fall away. Patience, Simon! The Master will pass through the hills some day, his white hands be raised over thee, the scales shall fall off, thy fevered brow shall be cooled, and the vigor of other days shall come back to thy languid, weakened

frame. One day from the Master's sacred hand will go forth thy healing and from His Sacred Heart thy pardon and His love.

But there is a more dreadful leprosy than Simon's leprosy of body. There is a leprosy of spirit, a disease that kills the soul. How many homes, by moral leprosy, are made a thousand times more sad and more unhappy that that home at Bethany? The father who, Sunday after Sunday, lies abed or dawdles away his time over the weekly paper, and does not attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is a moral leper, contaminating his own children. The man who of a Saturday night comes reeling home under the influence of liquor obtained in the electric-lit saloon, where he leaves his week's wages whilst the poor wife can not meet the rent or purchase food and clothing for the children, that man is foul with a disease more deadly than the malady of Simon of Bethany. In the homes of those fathers who spend their time at clubs, who neglect the religious education of their offspring, whose children hear the curse from their lips and never a prayer, in those homes, if we can call them by such a sacred name, there is a damage to the spiritual life more hurtful than any leprosy that ever cor-

rupted the body of the poorest Jewish outcast on the barren hills of Judea. How many homes are ruined, lives shattered, hearts broken and spiritual destinies wrecked by fathers of families who by bad example scandalize the little ones whom Christ so loved and for whom He died! And these are the very men who, month by month and year by year, stay away from the healing touch of the Master in the Sacrament of His love.

There are women also who are moral lepers. The mother whose home is unattractive, whose children are untidy, whose personal appearance is neglected and repulsive, who spends her days in idleness and gossip, who remains away from Mass, the Sacraments and the devotions of the Church, who says she sends her children to the Holy Sacrifice, but rarely kneels under the sanctuary lamp herself, who does not emphasize by her example what she half-heartedly teaches in word, that mother is tainting little by little the immortal souls of the innocent ones God has given to make music in her life. What is to be said of the mother who for the sake of society, as it is called, for the sake of fashion and pleasure, devotes hours upon hours to personal adornment, none too modest, and fritters away the

greater part of night after night in worldly pleasures, leaving her children to the tender mercies of often poorly paid nurses? What of the mother who sends her sons and daughters to what are called high-class schools, where no vestige of religion is inculcated, whose atmosphere, to say the least, is permeated with unbelief, doubt and worldliness? Better, that their children had been touched in early years with leprosy and had gone to God in their infancy and innocence, than to be thrust by their own heartless mothers into an atmosphere which will contaminate their souls and saturate them with moral and spiritual leprosy.

After His preaching in Bethany, our Lord went down, perhaps, to the shores of the Dead Sea. As yet the disciples have not been long in His company. The life is new to them, their minds are uninstructed and they are unaccustomed to His teaching. Here along the desolate coast of the Sea of the Plain, in the shadow of the rugged heights, they can find quiet and rest from their labors and can learn from His lips the lessons specially intended for their spiritual formation and growth. How much from the history of their people could be told them as they walked along the shore of the Sea, or lingered amid the hills!

On the heights beyond loomed up Herod's palace at Machærus, into whose dark dungeons the Baptist was to be thrown for his last testimony, save his death, to His Divine Master. In the deep, strong vault of his prison John was to verify by his sufferings the very words that are now flowing from his lips, and quieting the envy of his disciples: "He must increase, but I must decrease." I am not the bridegroom, "but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy, because of the bridegroom's voice." This and more, doubtless, suggested itself to our Beloved Saviour's mind, and who can conjecture in what words of loving tenderness He told His disciples the story of John's brave life? They would need the memory of that story later on in the days of stress and strain; the recollection of it, as told those peaceful evenings by the sea would give them strength and courage against enemies before whom they, like John, would have to give the testimony of their blood. They too would have to say by their deaths: "He must increase, but I must decrease," yet in the saying their faces would light up with joy, for they would hear "the Bridegroom's voice."

One wonders whether our Lord reminded

His disciples of the events, so glorious in the history of the Jews, which occurred in the land just over the sea. Up through Edom and across the Zared Moses led the chosen people after forty years of wandering in the desert, to the border and the sight of the Promised Land, which he might view but might not enter. It was amid those distant hills that the Israelites, under his leadership, defeated the Amorrhites who had refused the wanderers permission to pass through their land. The whole country from north to south was the scene of the victories of his people, which crowned the years of Moses ere God called him to the mountain-top to view the land before passing on the sceptre to Josue.

Did our Lord point out the sun-tipped summit of Mount Nebo and tell them the story of Moses' death, beginning little by little to prepare their loving, simple hearts against the day when He, their Master, would die upon the blood-stained Calvary? Who can tell? Did He unfold a scroll of part of the Old Testament and read them the beautiful account of the saintly lawgiver's last hours on earth? How touching the scene! The waves at sunset were noiselessly stealing up the sand; the reflection of the sun going down behind

Judea's hills was flung back, flashing in dazzling radiance, from the windows of Herod's palace; away in the distance Mount Nebo was yet bright under the last rays of the dying day; round the Master sat His disciples, looking up into His divinely tender face, and all the while, in a voice sweeter than the angels' song that floated over Bethlehem's valley at His birth, He read them from Deuteronomy the story of Moses' death: "Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab upon Mount Nebo, to the top of Phasga over against Jericho; and the Lord showed him all the land of Galaad as far as Dan, and all Nepthali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasses and all the land of Juda unto the furthermost sea, and the south part, and the breadth of the plain of Jericho, the city of palm-trees as far as Segor. And the Lord said to him: This is the land for which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying: I will give it to thy seed. Thou hast seen it with thy eyes, and shalt not pass over to it. And Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord. And He buried him in the valley of the land of Moab, over against Phogor: and no man hath known of his sepulchre until this day."

Then our Lord laid aside the scroll and told them of another death which would open the true Promised Land for all the tribes and peoples of men; He told them of another sepulchre whose rocky enclosure would be burst asunder by the glory and triumph of its victory over death and sin. And the curtain of night fell over the sea, and the tired, consoled disciples slept, and the Master prayed through the night.

THE HILLS OF THE JORDAN

AFTER lingering for a time by the Sea, our Lord would naturally turn to the hill-country of the south for the exercise of His holy ministry. Through the deep ravines, the thick forests and the rugged mountains He would make His way to the wooded slopes whence the hills dip gracefully in long undulations out towards the barren desert.

The land is rich in memories of His people and teems with incidents in the history of His nation. From the heights above Bersabee He can see the long reaches of the desert rolling away in rounded dunes till they are lost in the distance. Off to the south and east is Mount Hor, where Aaron died in the presence of Moses and Eleazar. There, too, the aged High Priest was buried. From that mountain the dimming eyes of the dying Aaron could catch just a glimpse of the Promised Land, which the lawgiver, his brother, before he, too, passed away, was to see so distinctly from the heights of Nebo.

How beautifully the death of Aaron on this mountain is described by Holy Writ, and how similar it was to the last hours of Moses! "The

Lord spoke to Moses: 'Take Aaron and his son with him and bring them up into Mount Hor. And when thou hast stripped the father of his vesture, thou shall vest therewith Eleazar his son; Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there.' Moses did as the Lord had commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor before all the multitude. And when he had stripped Aaron of his vestments, he vested his son with them. And Aaron being dead in the top of the mountain, he came down with Eleazar."

This scene reminds us of the death of the great High Priest of the New Law, the High Priest typified by Aaron, Eleazar and Melchisedech in the Old Dispensation. Their priesthood was only a symbol, a figure, a shadow; His was the divine reality. Holy Writ tells us: "He made of violet and purple, scarlet and fine linen, the vestments for Aaron to wear when he ministered in the holy places, as the Lord commanded Moses." The vestments of our High Priest were red, steeped in His blood. "Who is this that cometh . . . with dyed garments from Bosra: this beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength?" His death was not like the quiet passing away of the aged Aaron on

Mount Hor, as a child falls asleep on its mother's breast; a death over which all the multitude of the people mourned; the death of our High Priest was one of violence and of blood, before a hooting and scoffing rabble that rejected His Priesthood and rejoiced when He hung lifeless on the cross.

This scene of the Sacrifice of the New Law may have stood out that day before our Lord's mental vision as clearly as the undulations of the desert stretching out towards distant Egypt before His mortal eyes. Perhaps that spring day, as He rested on the heights above the wells of Bersabee, He may have dwelt sadly and lovingly upon the words which were in His soul on the cross and are ever in His Heart in the Tabernacle. How often He has whispered them to us! "What more could I do for thee, that I have not done? I have planted thee a most beautiful vine; and thou hast proved exceedingly bitter to Me: for in My thirst thou gavest Me vinegar to drink; and with a spear thou hast pierced the side of thy Saviour."

In those vast solitudes the Israelites had dwelt for forty years, and in all their wanderings, whether to the north or to the south, towards the sea, or where the hill-country fringes

the wilderness, "the Lord went before them to show the way by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire, that He might be the guide of their journey at both times. There never failed the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, before the people." During all that time God never failed to guide and lead them on. So, too, He never fails us. All others may prove untrue; our nearest and dearest may desert us; lips that smiled a welcome may be curled in scorn; hands that clasped ours in friendship may be withheld; our own flesh and blood may know us no more; but there is One who will never fail us, One who in the Tabernacle is no less to us than "the pillar of fire" was to the wanderers of old on the sandy reaches of Pharan.

"Trust Him then, through clouds and sunshine,
All thy cares upon Him cast
Till the storm of life is over
And the trusting days are past."

Our Lord may have lingered for some time at the wells of Bersabee. The district was sacred in the eyes of His people. That well at which He and His Apostles rested and whose clear waters they drank, had been dug by Abraham; and the trees whose shade they found so grateful on returning, wearied from

their active ministry, had been planted centuries ago by the venerable Patriarch. "But Abraham planted a grove in Bersabee, and there called upon the name of the Lord God eternal. And he was a sojourner in the land of the Palestines for many days." It may have been in the shade of the newly planted groves that Abraham heard the command which seemed to contradict God's former promises, the command which drew him from the welcome retreat of Bersabee to the summit of Mount Moriah, where he gave the proof of his loyalty which has awakened and strengthened the faith of all future ages: "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision: and there thou shalt offer him upon one of the mountains which I will show thee." The holy Patriarch raised the knife of sacrifice, a father—at the command of Him who is Eternal Life and controls the length of our years—and with his own hand was about to take away the life of his loved child. God had promised to multiply the children of Isaac, as the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens. Yet Abraham's trust did not waver, his faith did not fail. How could that promise be fulfilled, if the boy was to be slain and his dead body

laid away in the cave of Mambre. Nothing could cause the truth of Abraham to waver; nothing, his faith to fail.

Sad indeed would have been the death of Isaac had not God's Angel stayed the knife. Yet every day there are deaths far more sad; every day there are cruel murders of sons and daughters by still more cruel fathers and mothers; deaths, not of bodies; these in comparison would be of but small moment, and can not be deferred for more than a few fast fleeting years; for, even at best, our stay on earth is not for long, ere to-morrow's sun breaks in the eastern sky, we shall be gone. There is question of the death of the soul, brought about, not by the command of God, but in defiance of every law of the Most High. It is appalling to think that there are fathers and mothers ruining the souls of their own children. These children were given by God to brighten their lives and to knit together more closely two human hearts into closer affection and love. Their souls were entrusted to parents that in their young and tender years the seeds that spring up into the beautiful flowers of Christian virtue might be planted and nourished.

Yet how sad the fate of many children in so-

called Catholic homes! Better far had many of them been born to poverty and hard work, better for their eternal interests had their own fathers been bidden to sacrifice their young lives, as Abraham was commanded to offer up his own son Isaac, than that they should be brought up as many are trained to-day. The whole atmosphere which they breathe is worldly, saturated with vanity, love of comfort and luxury. It is poisoned with the germs of spiritual death, as really as the air of a small-pox ward is infected with disease. The conversations, the interests, the amusements and the occupations of such homes are vain, frivolous and worldly. The books, magazines and papers under the eyes of the children are often, as it is said, up-to-date, which frequently means, that under a veneer of literary merit, there lurks the suggestive, the impure, and too often what is subversive of all faith. In some homes the mothers themselves are the very ones that lure the children into habits and fashions which tend to break down the barriers which protect their innocent lives. It is the ambitious mother—and would to God she were ambitious in the highest sense—who teaches her own daughter to dress in a manner that ought to bring the blush to a modest girl.

What will be the judgment of Christ on the scandal that seems nowadays to sit so lightly upon the consciences of many parents! At the time of our Lord's last visit to Capharnaum, the city by the sea, that He loved so well, where He had toiled and labored so much, "calling unto Him and taking a little child, He set him by Him," then, emphasizing the purity of soul requisite for entrance into the Kingdom of God, and pointing to the children round about Him, He said: "Whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones, who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." Strange language from Him who was meek and humble of heart, from whose lips ever flowed words of gentleness, tenderness and love! If the accounting of parents bears any proportion to this love for the little ones and the unmistakable severity of His words, then the guilty have reason indeed to look forward to their day of reckoning with fear and trembling.

There is a story told of a wicked fisherman who dwelt on the rock-fringed shore of the sea. On wintry nights he was accustomed to hang a light on the cliffs to decoy storm-tossed

vessels on to the rocks. Captains out at sea sighting the light upon the shore, would take it for a beacon directing them to a harbor of safety. Joyfully then they would turn the prows of their vessels towards the shore. On they rushed, driven by wind, wave and tide, every heart aboard beating high with the hope of safety till suddenly in the dark, the vessel struck the rocks with a crash and split to pieces, becoming a plaything of the wild waves.

One night, after he had lured to destruction an unfortunate ship, when the winds had calmed and the waves were rolling in ripples upon the sandy shore below the cliffs, the fisherman, as was his custom, came stealthily out with his lantern to collect the bloodstained booty from the wreck. Along the beach there was a cask of wine, a case of cloth, a broken rudder, a torn sail; suddenly his foot touched something soft; turning it over and flashing the light down, he recognized the white face of his dead son, who had been captain of the wrecked vessel. Oh, the horror of the thought! He had lured to death, decoyed on to the rocks of destruction, his own boy, his own flesh and blood.

Can this story not find an application in a spiritual sense in the lives of many parents?

"Take these things hence'

What are they doing who hand over the care of their sons and daughters to schools where there is no definite religious training? Do they think the fine flowers of Christian virtues are like weeds and spring up spontaneously in the human heart? Daily experience proves that they grow and flourish only under constant and vigilant cultivation. Such fashionable schools are rocks of destruction for the souls of Catholics. And parents who send their children there are more guilty than the wicked fisherman, whose hands were red with the blood of his own son. They are decoying to spiritual death the immortal souls of their offspring, souls redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

The same may be said of mixed marriages, unguarded associations with those not of our faith, indiscriminate reading of modern literature, the frequentation of dangerous places of popular amusement. All these are decoys that, unless parents are on their guard, will lead their children to spiritual shipwreck and ruin. Picture our Lord's disappointment and His anger, if parents by their worldliness, their unmortified lives, by over-indulgence, by their earthly ambitions, have decoyed their children into unending ruin.

Let them take their children, as Abraham took Isaac "into the land of vision." Take them in their hearts, and in their prayers to the mount of the Tabernacle and offer them up to the Sacred Heart of Christ. If fathers and mothers would do this more frequently and draw from the Tabernacle the strength to lead serious and unworldly lives, there would be more hope for the glory of Christ and His Church. In the last analysis it is generally true to say that our children will do what we do and be what we are. It will be the exception if they are better, and then it is in spite of our example.

THE HILLS OF BERSABEE

AT length our Lord and His Apostles bade farewell to the region skirting the desert and moved on towards the uplands of the hill-country. For several weeks they had been exercising the sacred ministry in the neighborhood of Bersabee, baptizing, perhaps, with the waters from the wells of Abraham and Isaac. Reluctantly they leave these holy places so intimately associated with the earliest and the dearest incidents in their country's history. For these sacred spots, to which as far as we know they never again returned, saw the very beginnings of their national life, and teemed with the holiest memories of the blessed ones of their race.

On these slopes and plains Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwelt. Here other saintly Patriarchs tarried in their tents and watched their flocks browsing on the green hill-sides. Amid these surroundings the weeping Agar and her helpless boy Ismael wandered lonely and homeless looking for food and shelter, and there was none to break bread for them or offer them the protection of a friendly roof. It was this incident that St. Paul had in mind when in after

years he wrote so consolingly: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free."

The long line of hills which our Lord and His Apostles were slowly approaching was the beginning of the "hill-country of Judea." In earlier days before the dimming eyes of Moses had viewed the lands, his spies had hidden and lurked among these mountains when they came up from the desert to inspect the yet unknown country. "And Moses sent them to view the land of Chanaan and said to them: Go up by the south side. And when you shall come to the mountains, view the land of what sort it is." On their return the spies reported to Moses: "We came into the land to which thou sentest us, which indeed floweth with milk and honey." In and out these hills Josue, Caleb and their ten companions wandered, bearing grapevines heavy with their luscious fruit, as a trophy of the richness of the land.

From the summit of the mountains, which they reached by hard climbing up many a steep ascent, the view was enchanting and rich with

associations dear to the Apostles and to the Heart of our Blessed Saviour. Off to the south lay stretched out under their eyes the long rolling reaches of the desert fading away towards the horizon and towards the sea, in rounded dunes and sedge-covered level plains. For forty years on those barren wastes their forefathers dwelt, encamped sometimes at the foot of Horeb and Sinai, often marching to the north or to the south, led during the day by a cloud in the sky, and at night by a pillar of fire; fed during all those years by the manna that fell daily at the dawn from heaven, until finally they crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land. Will our Lord emphasize with His Apostles the obvious lesson of His Father's kindness to His people? Yet what is it when compared to the watchfulness of our Blessed Saviour in the New Law! No least circumstances of our lives, no slightest detail and no apparently insignificant trifle but what is foreseen and directed for our better good, if we are only half-faithful to the myriad graces which come to us from His Tabernacle.

Away to the west, towering into the clear blue sky, are the mountains of Moab. It was through these mountains that Moses finally led

the people towards the Jordan, and there at the command of God he ascended Mt. Nebo, passing on the leadership to Josue ere he died. Nearer is the lower line of jagged hills, the rocks and caves of Engaddi. Between these and the heights of Moab, but deep down in the valley are the waters of the Dead Sea, laden with the memories of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the distance were the woods and caves, where Saul and his three thousand soldiers hunted for the guiltless David. In one of the caverns David, when urged by his followers to slay the King, spared the life of Saul and said to his men: "The Lord be merciful unto me, that I may do no such thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, as to lay my hand against him, because he is the Lord's anointed." Sometimes people are less merciful towards "the Lord's anointed" priests when by gossip, criticism and even calumny they ruin a priest's character, destroying his good name, or lessen his influence for souls.

In the forest on the mountain-side of the desert of Ziph, David on another occasion eluded the efforts of the King to find the place of his hiding. Amid the cool shades of those wooded slopes Jonathan visited and consoled his exiled friend. "And Jonathan, the son of

Saul, arose and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hands in God: and said to him: 'Fear not, for the hand of my father Saul shall not find thee, and thou shalt reign over Israel, and I shall be next to thee.'" The friendship of Jonathan and David spoken of so beautifully in the sacred pages is a type of the friendship of our Blessed Saviour for each and every soul. "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David: and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." What is this knitting of soul compared to the union of our hearts with the Sacred Heart in the Sacrament of His love? What the yearning of the lonesome Jonathan for the exiled David in comparison with the longing of our Blessed Saviour in the Tabernacle for our affection and our love? The thirst on the cross when in His agony of suffering the words "I thirst" crossed His parched, cracked lips, is nothing, compared to the yearning of His Sacred Heart for the friendship of human souls.

Through a wide opening in the hills, glittering under the light of the setting sun, the roofs, towers and minarets of Hebron flashed out from its gardens, vineyards and olive groves—like an Italian town creeping up and crowning an olive-clothed hill. From those heights,

Abraham looking towards the east had seen the thick smoke that told of the awful destruction of Sodom rising out of the deep gulf between the hills of Engaddi and the mountains of Moab.

Down through the dead years in their history, Hebron was, perhaps, the spot richest with traditions and memories dear to every Jewish heart. It was at Hebron that Abraham had bought from Ephron in the vale of Mambre the cave of Machpelah for a burial place. In that cave lay the dust of Sara and the holy Patriarchs. It was towards this sacred spot that the thoughts of the dying Jacob turned in his last moments, when speaking to his sons gathered about his bed, "he charged them, saying: 'I am now going to be gathered to my people: bury me with my fathers in the double cave, which is in the field of Ephron the Hethite, over against Mambre in the land of Chanaan.'" In the early days of his settlement in Chanaan Jacob sent his sixteen-year old boy "out from the vale of Hebron" to inquire after the welfare of his sons who were feeding the flocks at Sichem and Dothain—a type of the Divine Son who came from the Heavenly Father seeking the welfare of His brethren. These brothers did not spare His

life as Joseph's was spared, but put Him to a death of shame on the ignominious cross.

David, after the death of Saul, "consulted the Lord, saying: 'Shall I go up to one of the cities of Juda?' And the Lord said to him: 'Go up.' And David said: 'Whither shall I go up?' And He answered him: 'Into Hebron.'" For seven years he ruled as King from Hebron over Juda, while Isboseth, son of Saul, held sway from Jerusalem over the rest of Israel. Down these very olive-clad hills Joab had led the forces of Juda into fierce and bloody battle against the tribes of Israel, and the troops did not stop in their retreat till they crossed the plains of the Jordan and entrenched themselves in their camp beneath the hills at Manahain. But now "the Lion of Juda" was passing through Hebron. His warfare was not to be with the wrangling tribes of Israel, but as St. Paul describes it, His "wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places." His apparent defeat, when His eyes closed in death on the cross, is His greatest triumph and most glorious victory.

Perhaps our Lord's thoughts may linger on

the day when the news of Isboseth's untimely death reached Hebron and saddened King David, though by that murder there was no rival for his crown, and he could now reign, not only over Juda, but over all Israel. "Then all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron, saying: 'Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Moreover, yesterday also and the day before, when Saul was King over us, thou wast he that did lead out and bring in Israel: and the Lord said to thee: Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be prince over Israel' . . . And they anointed David to be King over Israel." So our King to win our love has taken upon Himself our human nature. He anointed it, not with oil poured out by the hand of a priest, but with outpouring of His Divinity. David fed the people of Israel from the flocks that grazed on the rich pastures of Juda's hills, and from the rich yellow corn of Chanaan, but our King feeds the souls of His people with His own Body and Blood. As is said in Holy Writ: "You shall eat the flesh of the Mighty, and you shall drink the blood of the Victim, which I shall slay for you. And you shall be filled at My table."

This slaying of the Victim took place when He was made King. His crowning and anoint-

ing was not like David's, amid the shouts of joy that re-echoed from the thronging multitudes on Hebron's hills. Far different was the crowning and anointing of our King. The story of His crowning is simply told: "And plaiting a crown of thorns they put it upon Him." His blood-stained lips are murmuring to each of us: "I gave thee a royal sceptre: and thou hast given Me a crown of thorns." Our Blessed Saviour is King because His Sacred Body was consecrated by the God-head and anointed by the outpouring of His Blood and the shedding of that Blood upon the cross has made Him King in a truer and higher sense than David was King over the tribes of Israel.

Our Lord finally set out towards Bethlehem, that last part of His journey in the hill-country. Thither He and His Apostles, as far as we know, never returned. On their way to the "City of Juda," they were among the scenes familiar to the Baptist in his earlier years. Amid those rugged heights and lowlands, in silence and solitude far removed from fretting anxieties, distracting worldliness and gaieties, John formed and fashioned his life so as to be the worthy Forerunner of his Master. There amid arid hills, mountain caves and lonely caverns, communing with God and his

own soul in prayer, he strengthened his spirit against the day when he would give such testimony to Christ, that he would be called greater even than the prophets of the Most High.

What memories Bethlehem, nestling on the slopes of Juda's chalk hills, suggested to the mind of our Blessed Saviour! His thoughts, as He tells to His Apostles the story of His birth, will go back through the years, back to that first Christmas-eve, cold and bleak, when Mary and Joseph, tired and footsore, in the fast falling twilight made their way up the terraced hill to the already well-filled inn on the summit. They had come a long way from their mountain home at Nazareth, and the wintry winds had made that journey longer. They ought to have been welcome; for they were of the tribe of David, who as a ruddy shepherd lad had tended the flocks on their lonely slopes, but "there was no room for them in the inn." "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." And so it came to pass that in a wide limestone grotto dug by the water in the hill-side, up against which a rude stable had been built, Christ was born.

Our Lord lingers lovingly over each detail of that first Christmas night, dwelling for the sake of His Apostles, who listen eagerly, upon

every smallest circumstance. On the plateau, only a few miles distant across the valley, can be seen Herod's palace, whence swept forth that Christmas-eve sounds of earthly minstrelsy, which were drowned in the deep rich Heaven-sent harmonies of the "Glory be to God on high," chanted by angels' lips over Juda's hills as a welcome to the new-born King.

But no welcome was His in Bethlehem, save from the simple shepherds who came hurrying over the hills to adore. "And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: 'Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass.'" And they came and adored. They could not know that the wedded maid and Virgin wife had given birth to a wondrous Child, who was the Son of God, and yet they believed and adored. The faith of these happy shepherd lads was brighter in their hearts that night than the dazzling brightness that lit up the sky or the brilliant light that flashed over Bethlehem's hills from angels' wings.

With these and other incidents of the days that are gone will our Lord instruct His Apostles as they leave "the hill country of the

south," and together make their way through Judea on towards Galilee. No doubt, as they listened to His voice and looked into His face, and perhaps at night, as they rested under the clear Eastern sky on the slopes of Judea's hills, and the Master spent the night in prayer, "they said one to the other: 'Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?' "

THE HILLS OF SAMARIA

IT was while our Lord and His disciples were exercising the sacred ministry in the hill country of Judea, that the news of the Baptist's seizure and imprisonment by Herod Antipas probably reached them. Sad, then, and heavy of heart, the Master would pass out from the hill-country and on back into Galilee. He knew that the last scene in the drama of John's noble life was drawing near; already the Dead Sea's waves were moaning his death-song against the rocks of his prison of Machaerus. Soon the awful tragedy of his death would be brought to a close.

But the Baptist was of heroic spiritual mould, and instead of languishing and pining in the darkness of his dungeon because of his Master's absence, he rejoiced that the fame of our Lord was growing and spreading. His testimony had been given, his message delivered; now his words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," are about to be fulfilled. At his warning, however, no regrets rise up to darken his spirit, no murmurs spring unbidden to his lips, but his soul rejoices in his solitude at the news of the Bridegroom's voice.

In passing out from the hill-country our Saviour and His disciples chose the northern road that, climbing the hills and creeping down the slopes, winds through the valleys and mountains of Samaria and stretches on into Galilee over the Plain of Esdraelon. All day long the travel-stained pilgrims move through Judea and Samaria, halting at length in the neighborhood of Sichar—a city not far from the well which the patriarch Jacob had bequeathed to his son Joseph. "He cometh therefore to a city of Samaria, which is called Sichar, near the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph."

"Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being weary with his journey, sat thus on the well. It was about the sixth hour." How beautiful! How touching the scene! "It was about the sixth hour." The evening was coming on, and the skies glowed, above the curved edges of the mountain, with glorious sunset colors that the inspired brush of artist tries in vain to reproduce. The slopes and sides of Mts. Ebal and Gerizim, brilliant with the bright green of the newborn wheat, are streaked with the dark, lengthening shadows of the olive and fig trees. Along the edges of the road and on the fields sparkle in

"I perceive that Thou art a prophet"

variegated tints the early spring flowers, which seem to laugh in the joy of their beautiful new life. Weary and alone, "for His disciples were gone into the city to buy meats," the kind Master sat by the well. Who can doubt but that in the quiet of that growing twilight hour His thoughts went back to what were almost the earliest and the most sacred memories in the history of His people? For round this consecrated spot where He is now resting the holiest events in the history of his race entwine themselves.

Here, long centuries ago, Abram built an altar at the bidding of Almighty God. Leaving Haran, he "went out to go into the land of Chanaan. And when they were come to it, Abram passed through into the place of Sichem, as far as the noble vale. And the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him: 'To thy seed will I give this land.' And he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him." To this hallowed spot, where his father, Jacob, had also built an altar and worshipped the one true God, the bones of Joseph were brought after they had been carefully and reverently guarded by the Israelites during the forty years of wandering in the desert. During all those years of vicissitudes that

changeable people, though faithless in many ways, were loyal and true to the sacred trust of the remains of Joseph. These they treasured lovingly, and at length deposited in their last resting-place in the parcel of ground his father had purchased.

Will our Lord go back in spirit into the land of Egypt and recall the words of the dying Joseph? "God will visit you after my death, and will make you go up out of this land, to the land which He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "And he made them swear to him, saying: 'God will visit you, carry my bones with you out of this place.' And he died, being a hundred and two years old. And being embalmed he was laid in a coffin in Egypt." How faithful the Israelites were to the last wishes of the expiring patriarch is told us in the book of Josue: "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had taken out of Egypt, they buried in Sichem, in that part of the field which Jacob had bought of the sons of Hemor, the father of Sichem, for a hundred young ewes, and it was in the possession of the sons of Joseph."

Perhaps our Lord's thoughts went into the future to the altar that He also was to build and to the tomb in which His bones were to

be buried. He Himself would not erect the altar upon which He, the Great High Priest, was to offer sacrifice; it would be built by His enemies in malice and in hate. His altar would be in no quiet valley, rich with every beauty generous nature could supply, and joyous with the sweet harmony of the choristers of the early spring; but built it would be, a cruel cross lifted up on the rocky summit of Mount Calvary amid the hootings and the derision of a clamoring rabble, thirsting for His blood. No victim caught in Sichem valley, or on the wooded slopes of Ebal or Gerizim will be burnt on the altar of the cross outside of Jerusalem, but the life of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world will slowly ebb in red blood, shed because the Victim, and at the same time the High Priest, "having loved His own who were in the world, loved them unto the end."

These and other reflections, upon which our Lord may have been meditating, were interrupted by the approach of a woman to the well. "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her: 'Give Me to drink.'" He was thirsty that quiet evening, after His long journey. The day may have been warm, the roads dusty, as He journeyed

the long distance with His disciples. His mouth was dry and parched, and He yearned for the cool, clear water that sparkled under the dying light beyond His reach, deep down in the dark well. Gracious and kind would have been the gift of the cool drink, and grateful had He been if the Samaritan had acceded to his request.

But there was in the soul of Christ that day a greater thirst than that which parched His mouth and dried His dust-stained lips. There was in His Sacred Heart the thirst, the longing, the yearning for the souls of men. No physical thirst that has ever tortured shipwrecked mariner can be compared to the longing of the Sacred Heart for our souls and for our love.

Strange that our Blessed Saviour should so yearn for these two things! Sacred history is a record from the beginning of God's ceaseless striving to secure them. Familiar intercourse in paradise, angelic messages, divine visions, prophetic threats and promises, temporal calamities and temporal rewards, were in the Old Law all directed to this one end. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," our Lord cried in despairing sorrow, "thou that killest the prophets and stonest those that are sent unto thee, how often

would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!"

And, "last of all, God sent to men His Son, saying: 'They will reverence My Son.'" And the Son came in a form and under circumstances the most calculated to win our souls and our love. He came a little child at Bethlehem, to call forth the tenderest instincts of our hearts; a fugitive from the cruel jealousy of the wicked Herod to appeal to our compassion; a lowly artisan to encourage us in our daily grinding toil and to win our familiarity, and then in His public life He unfolded before us a new revelation of His character and His love. He was no longer the God of Sinai, who spoke to His people in the flashing of lightning and the crashing of thunder; the God who in anger opened heaven's flood-gates for forty days and forty nights; or poured out fire upon the guilty cities of the plain; not the God of David who slew the people because of David's sin—but it was the God of the New Dispensation, a God reconciled to man through Christ, a God who walked again familiarly with men, taking their little ones to His Heart to bless them, seeking out their sick to cure them, their afflicted to heal and console them,

multiplying bread for those who hungered, pouring balm on every wound of body and assuaging every sorrow of heart, and even raising the dead to life,—a God who had only words of sweetest gentleness and pardon for repentant sinners, who held the powers of grace and nature in the hollow of His hand, at the service of all who chose to make appeal to Him. "And now, ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and yet more of Judea, judge between Me and My vineyard—what is there I ought to do to My vineyard that I have not done?"

Thus it was that this thirst of our Blessed Saviour found expression in His efforts to win our souls. But there was one more thing he could do to draw our hearts to Him—He could die. And so, when all else had been fulfilled, He hastened to give this last and supremest proof of love, "I have a baptism," He cried, "wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished, until My last breath be drawn, My last drop of blood poured out to win men's hearts!"

We have often read of martyrs who seemed to rejoice in the greatness of their sufferings, because of the intensity of their love. We have read of St. Paul's desire to be with Christ, of Blessed John Fisher, who on his

way to death, flung aside his staff as he drew near the scaffold and cried aloud: "Run quickly, O my feet, for we are near to God." But what was the yearning of St. Paul, what the love of the martyrs, compared to Christ's love for us; what their finite longing for the joys of Heaven to Christ's infinite and consuming thirst for souls? How pathetically this love of our Blessed Saviour is put before us in the liturgy of the Church on Good Friday: "My people, what have I done to thee? or in what have I grieved thee? Because I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt: thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour. I gave thee wholesome water to drink out of the rock: thou hast given Me gall and vinegar. What more could I do for thee, that I have not done? I have planted thee a beautiful vine: and thou hast proved exceedingly bitter to Me: for in My thirst thou gavest me vinegar to drink: and with a spear thou hast pierced the side of thy Saviour." In such touching plaints the Church strives to impress on us the love of the Heart of Christ for souls.

We can go back then in spirit to that spring evening in the valley of Sichem and hear the pleading of the Sacred Heart for souls, when in tones gentler than a mother's whisper to

her sleeping babe, He says: "Give Me to drink." At the same moment up from His Heart to the throne of His Father wells the cry: "Give Me back the souls for whom I shivered on the chalk-hills of Bethlehem on the first Christmas night; for whom I prayed during the years of My exile beyond the Nile; for whom in the carpenter's shop My limbs were fatigued and My hands hardened by toil. Give Me back the souls for whom I am going to labor during the years of My ministry by the lake, beyond the Jordan, in Jerusalem's streets, and on the Galilean hills." The same request that He made of the Samaritan woman, akin to the dying cry "I thirst" which escaped His parched lips on the cross, comes out from the Tabernacle into every human heart. He asks from each and every one their love, He yearns and longs for men's souls.

Surely we will do our part to grant this request, to slake this burning thirst. We have all heard of the sacrifice which a mother makes when her life is offered that her child may live. Bitter though it be to part with all that the human heart clings to, sad though it be to look into the open grave in her young years, it is sweetened by the thought that her sacrifice is the ransom of a life she loves, her yet

unborn child's. But judge of her anguish if she should learn that her agony is all in vain—that she dies, but her child dies too, is dead already, will never taste the life she would have purchased for it with her own. This anguish we must not force upon the Heart of Jesus. He must not have thirsted and died for us in vain. How gladly we should have given him to drink at the well in Samaria! How gladly we should have sacrificed all to assuage His dying thirst! We can do better. We can listen to His pleading from the Tabernacle. We can kneel often, aye, daily, at His Holy Table, and, purified from sin, bathed in His own most precious Blood, consecrate our lives to win souls for Him.

THE HILL OF COMFORT

AFTER the interview with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, our Lord stayed two days in Samaria. The precise character of His work during those two days is not told us in the sacred pages. There is no record of any miracle; but His preaching was a fruitful sowing, and the harvest was immediate. "Many believed in Him because of His word." That our Blessed Saviour's preaching had found a ready response and lit up in their souls the fire of faith can not be doubted; for they said to the woman: "We now believe, not for thy saying, for we ourselves have heard Him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

"Now after two days, He departed thence, and went into Galilee." This journey to Cana in Galilee—for Cana was to be the scene of His next recorded miracle and preaching—will teem with memories embedded in the history and tradition of His people. The road stretching through the hills and valleys has hardly left Sichem before it passes not far from Dothain, whither Joseph came at the command of Jacob, to inquire after the welfare

of his brethren who were watching their flocks. It was then that Joseph, at the suggestion of Juda who wished to save his brother's life, was sold to the Ismaelites for twenty pieces of silver. "What will it profit us to kill our brother, and conceal his blood? It is better that he be sold to the Ismaelites and our hands be not defiled." Peering into the not very distant future our Lord could see the hour when He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver and the hands of His children would be defiled with His blood. It consoled Him to reflect that His blood-shedding was to be the cleansing of His people from their sins. It comforted Him to recollect that the wild cry which was to go forth from the lips of the frenzied mob on Good Friday: "His blood be upon us and upon our children," was to be counteracted by the prolongation of that cry in millions of Christian souls where it would become a petition, not for an unjust death, but for mercy and for pardon.

Descending from the hills of Manasses they leave Samaria and enter the confines of Galilee. Out before them to the north and to the east and west stretches the historic plain of Esdraelon. With it are associated some of the saddest and some of the most joyous

memories of their race. There upon the slopes of Gelboe the three sons of Saul were slain and the King himself, grievously wounded by the pursuing archers, fell upon his own sword and closed his memorable career. Upon those fields that rolled away towards Nazareth Josias imprudently gave battle to the Egyptian King, and was wounded. "They carried him away to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in the monument of his fathers, and all Juda and Jerusalem mourned for him." No sadder dirge has ever been chanted than that which the inspired Jeremias sang over the death of Josias. Did our Blessed Saviour's mind look into the future and did He hear in spirit Mary's sad farewell on Good Friday evening as she laid her dead Son away in a borrowed grave? On these undulating fields of Esdraelon, Gedeon with his valiant three hundred routed the hordes of Madianites and Amalecites who had invaded Israel and overrun the plain, wasting the country down the valley of the Jordan and the fertile western lowlands as far as Gaza.

On the way to Cana, whither our Lord and His disciples are journeying, they will pass Sunam, the home of the Sunamitess, where Eliseus foretold, in return for hospitality, the

birth of her son. And later on when all joy had gone from that home by the son's death, the aged prophet once more brought happiness to the grief-stricken mother, by giving back to her her boy, restored to the vigor of his young life. No doubt there stands out before our Lord's vision that other scene of the spring day, not so far distant now, when on Naim's hill he will command the son of the heart-broken widow to leave the land of the dead and come back to his weeping mother. Endor, too, and Thabor they passed as they made their way through the plain; the former memorable for the vision of Samuel, who foretold to King Saul his death in battle; the other to be the scene of the vision of the Man-God, lifted up with Moses and Elias. They, too, spoke of death; "and they were talking with Jesus, and they spoke of His decease, which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem."

Our Lord and His disciples finally arrived at Cana. Passing through Nazareth, as they probably did on their journey, all the memories of His years of prayer and solitude will come back to Him, years of sweetest association and loving companionship with His Mother, years of toil and labor with Joseph in the little shop

near their cottage. Now Joseph has gone, he lies sleeping in the hillside outside the town, awaiting the day of our Lord's triumph over death. His visit to Cana will be a welcome one. For the disciple, Nathanael, the man "without guile," is from Cana. The memories of the first miracle, with which He gladdened the guests at the wedding-feast, will be still in the minds of all who had witnessed or heard of the wonder.

Shortly after His arrival in the little town, "there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum, and he having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to Him, and prayed Him to come down and heal his son." This appeal from the grief-stricken father, touched, as we shall see, the compassionate Heart of our Blessed Saviour. It was a sad home that the ruler had left when he started for Capharnaum to appeal and entreat for the life of his child. All his hopes were centered upon that boy. He had with pride watched his growth from childhood to the present hour. That boy was the light and joy of his home. In earlier days, when the child had been ill, a darkness akin almost to despair overshadowed his soul. The favored father had hoped later on, perhaps, to take

his son to Rome to visit the haunts of former years, and to show him to the friends of other days. Many a time at evening on the porch of their home, as they looked out upon the waters of the Lake, golden under the slanting rays of the setting sun, and listened to the low murmur of ripples that dissolved in thin lines of snowy foam on the white sands, he and the boy's mother had talked long into the night of their aims and hopes for his future.

But now all was changed; their child lay dying in Capharnaum. The light had gone out from their home, joy had passed away from that cheerful fireside, tears had replaced the once happy smiles, No bright dawn broke the dark night that encircled the once joyous cottage. Their boy's life was gradually ebbing away, its tide was slowly drifting on out towards the ocean of eternity. Soon their child upon whom they had built such high hopes for the future, would sleep his last long sleep in the quiet of the slope of an obscure Galilean hill. Death, ever sad, becomes inexpressibly sadder, when one so young is cut down, like an early-born spring flower by an unexpected frost, in all the bloom of young life and in all the rich promise of coming years. There seemed to be no power in medicine, no skill in

Roman physicians, no efficacy in human effort that would lengthen the hours of their son's life.

One thing more the despairing father could do, one last effort he could make. The Master, the strange teacher who some time ago had changed the water into wine at Cana, who had wrought such works of compassion during His short stay at Capharnaum, surely He would have pity and would cure the child. Over the hills then, with new-lit hope in his heart, the anxious father hurried, fearful, no doubt, that his loved boy would die in his absence. Love and hope lent speed to his feet. How he hastened over the weary miles dreading lest the Galilean Teacher should have left the little town before he could reach Him and could make his appeal for the cure of the one who was dearer to him than his own life!

At length Cana was reached, and the Master found. The proud ruler, casting himself at our Blessed Saviour's feet, pleaded for his child's life. For a moment that life so dear to him seemed to hang in the balance, for Jesus said to him: "Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." This momentary check, the gentle rebuke intended for the by-standers as well as for the pleading father,

"Thy son liveth"

seems to have aroused the faith required by our Blessed Saviour; for up from the heart of the sorrowing but hopeful man welled the agonizing cry, trembling in earnest passionate entreaty on his lips: "Lord, come down before my son dies." Then in tones sweeter than the low soft music heard at the most solemn moment of the sacrifice before the Holy of Holies in the Temple Jesus said to him: "Go thy way." "As he was going down, his servants met him; and they brought him word, that his son lived . . . and himself believed, and his whole house." For at the moment that Jesus had said "that his son lived," at the same hour "the fever left him."

Now Jesus Christ, as St. Paul says, is the same "yesterday and to-day and the same forever." As His Heart went out in pity, compassion and love towards that poor suffering father and mother, so His Heart goes out to us in our every trial and our every sorrow. "The bruised reed He shall not break, the smoking flax He shall not quench." These words are as true of our Blessed Saviour in the Tabernacle as they were in the days when Isaias spoke them of Him in his vision of the future. Like the poor suffering ruler who hurried to the Master at Cana where He had

changed the water into wine, we must in our sorrows and our trials hasten to Him before His altar where He changes the wine into His Precious Blood. It is there that we must plead with Him, and He will lift the burden from our bruised shoulders or give us strength to bear it cheerfully; He will wipe the tears from our eyes and cheeks, and cause the smiles to wreathe our lips.

But to be heard we must pray. Our Lord bids us in earnest words to pray. "Ask and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in Heaven, give good gifts to them that ask Him!" Such is the language of the Blessed Saviour Himself. How true this teaching is, He himself showed us during the days of His sojourning upon earth. No cry went up from human lips for relief and remained unanswered. No plea for cure of body,

no petition for healing of spirit, whether in Jerusalem's streets, or on Genesareth's white shore was ever unheard or refused.

As it was in days of old so it is to-day. In His Tabernacle He dwells and His Heart goes out in sympathy as it did long ago, to every soul stained with sin, to every heart bleeding in pain, or agonizing with grief, to every spirit crushed with failure or disappointment. The same loving pleading that came over His lips among the hills of Galilee wells up in His Heart even now towards each suffering soul: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." It is sad that we will not go. Instead we turn to creatures, to pleasures, to earthly gratifications, human comforts, and strive to fill our hungering souls with husks that will never satisfy. Go to the altar in every darkness and the light will break, in every weakness and strength will be infused, in every sorrow and joy will come; go with faith; no cry from human soul will be unheard. Stay away, and sadness and darkness and weakness and sin will sooner or later wrap the soul round about with a mantle which may one day envelope it in sentiments of despair.

THE HILLS OF REJECTION

THE heart of the ruler had been gladdened by the promise of his son's cure; and confident that his prayer had been heard, he was going back to his home by the sea. The clouds that had hung heavily over his spirit had melted away under the warmth of the loving assurance, "Thy son liveth." Meanwhile our Blessed Saviour seems to have left Cana, the scene of this kindness, and to have turned His steps towards Nazareth.

How familiar it all was—the changing color on Carmel and Tabor, the swell of the hills and the sweep of the valleys, the fields and the plain. Childhood, boyhood, youth and early manhood had all been spent among those scenes. They had been His home since earliest years. They were to be His home no longer. Only a few short months before He had gone forth from them and from His Mother's presence, never more to return. The fireside of His up-growing years was to know Him no more.

During the interval much had occurred to stir all Israel and to focus all eyes on the carpenter's Son; but it is not of this that He

thinks as He approaches Nazareth; it is His recent parting with Mary that stands vividly before His mind. A sad and painful separation it had been for both. There have been many sad partings in the history of the human race, but none so painful as that of Jesus and Mary, for never have human hearts been so closely knit together by so warm a love. Alas, no more amid the old familiar scenes would that Mother see her Son, nor listen for the welcome sound of His footsteps, or the music of His voice. And yet there before Him lay the Holy House of Nazareth, which Joseph had governed and supported and Mary had hallowed by Her gentle sanctity; while all the time "the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age and grace with God and man." There had been no sound of battle in that holy home, but He was ever "girding His sword upon His thigh." Now all was changed, the strife had begun, and it would end, He knew, only with His death on Calvary.

As the shadows of Mount Carmel were growing longer and stretching out towards the east over the fields, and the calm Friday evening was closing in over the valley,

our Lord once more entered into His native town. Out upon the clear evening air rang the double blast from the trumpet warning all of the approach of the Sabbath. Early on the holy day our Lord repaired to the Synagogue, where during all those years He had worshiped and listened to the expounding of the Law. Recollections of earlier days no doubt flooded His soul. Some are gone from the Synagogue and their places have been taken by others; but He is once more with them to join in the common worship of His Father and to mingle His voice with theirs in a common liturgy.

One consideration might detain us for a moment, as we note the reverence and devotion of our Blessed Lord in the House of Prayer, and His exact fulfilment of the Law. Every requirement will be carried out, and no least detail omitted; yet the Synagogue was only a shadow, a type, a symbol of our holy temples. The Old Dispensation was dying and giving way to the New, yet our Lord reverenced its least iota, and He scourged from the sacred precincts of His Holy House the buyers and sellers. In the New Law there is no symbol, no shadow, but the substance and reality. Back of the tabernacle-door we have the Body

and Blood of the Eternal Word. On our altars is offered up in daily sacrifice the Divine Victim, offered on Mount Calvary on the first Good Friday; our churches are holy, for "holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days." Yet though this be true, and we believe it firmly, how common it is for Catholics to stay away from Mass! How readily they find reasons to excuse themselves from this obligation—thus depriving themselves of the richest graces and giving scandal to their children and neighbors!

There is a story of a Catholic gentleman who had a cottage at the sea-shore. One Sunday morning, after the bell had rung for the last Mass and his family had gone, he remained seated on his porch reading the Sunday papers. He preferred the Sunday papers to the Gospel, the latest sensational news to the Word of God. A Protestant neighbor happened by and being surprised, accosted him:

"Why, aren't you going to church?"

"No, I think I shall not go to-day."

His neighbor somewhat taken aback blurted out:

"Why, I thought you were a Catholic?"

Our friend somewhat indignantly answered:

"Certainly I'm a Catholic, and have always been one."

The Protestant gentleman then said:

"Well, I have only one thing to say, and I trust you'll not be offended. If I could believe what your Church teaches and what you profess to believe about the doctrine of the Mass, there would be nothing in this whole world to induce me to remain away from Mass, and I'd crawl on hands and knees to be present at so wonderful a sacrifice."

A much-needed lesson well and forcibly taught. Constant and punctual attendance at Mass and reverence and devotion in the House of God ought to be the badge of every Catholic.

At the usual time in the service our Lord arose, and unrolling the scroll which contained the portion of Isaias which He intended to expound to His hearers, He proceeded to address them. The beautiful passage read from the Prophet is a description of our Lord's work and mission. He was anointed by His Divinity to preach the Gospel to the poor; He was sent to heal the contrite of heart, to preach to captives, to give sight to the blind, to heal the bruised. How like the words of our Lord on that other occasion, when John from the

solitude of his prison, sent his disciples with the question: "Art thou he that art to come; or look we for another?" And Jesus answering, said to them: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the Gospel is preached: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in Me."

These words which brought light, comfort and strength to the Baptist in the darkness of the dungeons of Machaerus, had the effect of irritating and scandalizing His fellow-townsmen. As He spoke that Sabbath morning in the Synagogue every eye was fixed upon Him. He was listened to with rapt attention. There was manifested at first interest, then surprise, and finally fierce anger and deep hate. In explaining the passage from Scripture our Lord claimed that it was fulfilled in Him; that He was the Messias of whom Isaias had sung hundreds of years before. Little by little the Jews began to realize the greatness of His claim.

Angered at His words, indignant at His pretences, they murmured among themselves: "Is not this the Son of Joseph?" "Who is this man that teaches us? Was He not brought

up here with us in the village? He has never studied in the schools with our Priests and Doctors." And they said to Him: "As great things as we have heard done in Capharnaum, do also in Thy own country." But our Blessed Saviour would not work His miracles at the bidding of an angry throng in the Synagogue. Besides geographical relationship was no reason for a display of His power and so He answered them: "In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there was a great famine throughout all the earth. And to none of them was Elias sent, but to Sarepta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian." Here were miracles wrought not for the healing and benefit of the Jew, but for the Phœnician widow of Sarepta and the leper of Syria.

This answer was more than they could endure. Were they no better than the Gentiles and foreign lepers? Must they listen to this from "Joseph's Son," who had worked all His life in the carpenter's shop? Away with Him out of the city. He must not be permitted to

linger within its precincts, even though it be the Sabbath. "And all they in the Synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city." The angry crowd rushed from the Synagogue. "And they brought Him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong." Was He thinking of that other day when He would be cast out of the Sacred City and led to a hill from which He would not escape? To-day, "passing through the midst of them, He went His way," but on Good Friday He would not leave the sacred hill of Calvary till, taken dead from the cross, He would be borne by loving hands to His resting-place in a borrowed grave.

St. John says of our Blessed Saviour: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." When He asked for a place in which to be born on the first Christmas night, the doors of Bethlehem's cottages were closed in His Mother's face. The first time He taught on Mount Moriah in the great Temple of His people He was unwelcome, and they asked for "a sign." When He first preached in the Synagogue of Nazareth they questioned His authority and demanded "a sign." Dying on

the cross with His life blood slowly ebbing away, the same request or rather taunt was flung out at Him in the gathering gloom, and was an echo of the demand for "a sign" in the Temple of the Sacred City and in the Synagogue. "He saved others; Himself He can not save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him."

And so, cast out from His native town, our Lord left Nazareth never, it would seem, to return. From the slope of the hill He will look out upon Carmel's shaded summits, the white-fringed shore of the sea, and the rich rolling fields of Esdraelon, and tender recollections will fill His Sacred Heart. Doubtless there were friends in that secluded valley who would miss Him, and quiet homes where He had ever been welcome, but now casting one long lingering look behind, He hurries on to Capharnaum, where other friends, simple honest fishermen, await Him, and where other homes will throw open their doors to receive Him. In the future His home, as far as He has a home, will be Capharnaum, beside the sunlit waters of the sea.

The epitome of our Lord's life could be well represented by the mystery of His rejection

at Nazareth; for, from Bethlehem where there was no room for Him in the inn, to Calvary where He died an outcast, the story is ever the same, the story of rejected love. The same cry which on Good Friday rang out so fiercely from the angry mob, "Not this one but Barabbas," has found an echo in many human hearts down through the years, and finds an echo today. How many there are who close their eyes to the light! They see clearly that there ought to be more self-sacrifice in their lives, less worldliness, less love of dress, of ease and fashion, more time given to prayer, to deeds of charity, more generous giving of money for good works and for the poor, all this they see and hold back; in their hearts "not this one but Barabbas" finds an echo.

There are men who feel our Lord pleading with them to break away from some habit of self-indulgence, some habit which is ruining their homes, saddening the lives of those near and dear to them, wrecking their future; yet they turn a deaf ear to the low sweet voice of Mary's Son, urging them to cast far from them the glass of cursed liquor which like a cancer is eating away their strength, and these men will not listen; they are selfish cowards, in their soul re-echoes the cry of Good Friday "not this one

but Barabbas"; they are stone-deaf to the pleading cry of the dying Master, "I thirst," almost the last words that fell from His lips in His awful agony. The same is true of all the long line of selfish indulgence and passion. Christ to-day is being cast out from souls and hearts, just as of old He was banished from Nazareth, the home where He played in childhood and toiled in maturer years. He went out from Nazareth and never came back. God grant He may return with even more powerful graces into the lives of those who banish Him! For that is the saddest of all sad days for human hearts, when Christ goes forth from them never to return. May the Sacred Heart avert such a calamity from us!

THE HILLS OF PLENTY

REJECTED by His own townspeople, our Lord turned His face and directed His footsteps to the busy towns by the Lake of Galilee. Along its shores and on the hills that look down upon its waters He was to perform during the coming months wondrous and frequent marvels of tenderness and love. Holy Writ tells us that "leaving the city of Nazareth, He went down and dwelt in Capharnaum, a city of Galilee, on the sea-coast, in the confines of Zabulon and Nepthalim; and there He taught on the Sabbath days."

Here, then, He seems to have been ever welcome and to have found a permanent home. The cottage on Nazareth's olive and fig-clad slopes, where for well-nigh thirty years He had lived with Mary and Joseph in holy peace and heavenly prayer, would know Him no more. Those days were past, never to live again. Henceforth most of His time would be spent toiling for souls within sight and sound of the sea.

In those days the mountain-lake was not a quiet retreat like the arid hills above the Dead Sea where the Baptist strengthened his spirit

by prayer and solitude in the years of his preparation to give testimony to his Master. It was not conducive to retirement and separation from worldly distractions and interests. On the contrary no place could have been more suited for our Lord's mission and loving zeal and compassion. He came as He had said so recently in Nazareth, quoting Isaias: "The Spirit of God is upon me. Wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart"; He had come bidding all who were weary and heavy-laden to turn to Him; He had come to save that which was lost. Nowhere could have been found such opportunity of carrying on this mission as in the seething, teeming villages by the Lake. Then, too, it was from the sea-side towns that the loved companions of His mission came. Those hardy, simple fishermen, who were so soon to cast in their lot with Him, and to be inseparably united with Him in loyal trust, were brought up on the shores of Genesareth.

"And Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee." Perhaps the night before had been stormy on the Lake. The quiet waves, now glistening under the morning light just brightening above the eastern hills, had been lashed

"Launch out into the deep"

to fury during the long dark hours and had crashed in anger on the hardened beach. Now all was calm and the waters were as smooth as the undimpled face of a sleeping child. The almost noiseless ripples lapping the shore broke silently into a long thin line of snowy foam. Slowly had the hours dragged away that night for the toiling fishermen, and when the morning broke no draught of fishes had rewarded their efforts. Tired and disappointed the Apostles were engaged in washing from their nets the sand and pebbles with which a stormy sea had clogged them, and in repairing the torn meshes broken by the waves.

"And it came to pass that when the multitudes pressed upon Him." In their eagerness to hear His voice, to catch His every word, in their anxiety to look up into His face upon which there ever shone gentleness and sympathy, they pressed forward, thus forcing our Blessed Saviour to recede towards the water. He would not rebuke or find fault with their longing to miss no syllable that fell from His lips, but "going into one of the ships that was Simon's He desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting He taught the multitudes out of the ship." What a comfort for those simple Galileans that day on the sea-

shore to listen to that voice, sweeter and more gentle than a mother's lullaby over the cradle of her tired child, softer than the music of the lapping waves at their feet! How different His teaching from the lifeless, formal utterances of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day in the synagogues! The boat rocked gently upon the swell and fall of the water and He fed those poor starving souls. From His lips came no dull, dry, formalistic teaching, but words of life and comfort and strength.

This eagerness to hear the preaching of our Blessed Saviour who spoke in parables that morning, contrasts strangely with the dispositions of many to-day who listen to the Word of God. The Apostles were sent "to preach the Gospel"; the good tidings of salvation are to be spread by preaching; yet many purposely neglect to hear, many grow weary of it, weary of the story of the most pathetic, beautiful, and helpful life which has ever been lived. There are others who talk of and discuss sermons in a spirit not of faith but of carping and criticism; not to their own profit, but to their own soul's hurt; often applying the Word of God to the lives of their neighbor rather than to their own. Yet Holy Writ tells us: "He that turneth away his ears from

hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination."

Each sermon is an event in our lives freighted with graces for our souls, if we are eager and alert to profit. The Word of God vivifying through the unction of the Holy Spirit human utterance, is intended to enlighten our minds, inflame our hearts and bless our lives. In the Old Dispensation Moses enjoined knowledge of the Law and reverence for it: "Lay up these, my words, in your hearts, and hang them for a sign on your hands, and place them between your eyes. Teach your children that they meditate on them." If this be true of the Law of Moses, how much more binding is it with regard to the Law inculcated and preached on the hillsides of Galilee and by the shore of its Lake. It is the duty of every Catholic to hear frequently the Word of God both for the nourishing of faith in his own soul and for his instruction that he may be equipped to explain and defend that faith if need be. This is especially true to-day when the very atmosphere that we breathe, the literature that is obtruded upon us from all sides teems with a spirit of unbelief, of sensuality and of denial of the supernatural. A needed and powerful antidote will be found in

the frequent and reverent hearing of the Word of God and in the diligent perusal of Catholic books.

"When He had ceased to speak, He said to Simon: 'Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.'" The crowd, no doubt, lingered on the shore regretting that His discourse had come to an end. The long dark hours of toil were over, and the storm that had swept the Lake was past. Those dreary hours had been disappointing to the Apostles and their labor had been fruitless, for no fish had come into their nets. They were looking forward to a day of rest with the hope of success during the coming night. The Heart of Christ went out to them in their failure, with a sympathy that was always ready and ever tender. Ill-success may have made Simon despondent, but, at the word of Him whom he reverenced and trusted, he answered: "Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing: but at Thy word I will let down the net." His faith was instantly rewarded by a large draught of fishes. "And when they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking."

The long hours of bootless toil and unsuc-

cessful fishing were weary ones for the Apostles. The labor on the Lake that stormy night was heavy and discouraging, and when early light breaking over the hills bade them soon draw their boats to the beach, they were tired, sad and despondent. Had they only known that our Lord lovingly watched them through the storm, that before the sun was high in the heavens their nets would be full unto the breaking, how different would have been their feelings, how much brighter their tired and tanned faces! Yet so it turned out. For softly from His lips flowed the words of power: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught."

In our own lives during the long night-watches of our sorrow, when tears flow and unbidden sighs and murmurs cross the lips; when we look into the dear dead face and think of the long, lonesome years till those lips shall greet us again and those closed eyes smile once more into our faces; when years of prayer seem unheard and those near and dear to us still wander far, like the prodigal, from the welcome roof of the Father's house; let us remember that "He who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." No incident of our lives, no smallest or most trivial circum-

stance escapes His loving care. How strong we should be, could we bear in mind the words of Moses, when the multitudes of the enemy struck terror into the heart of his people: "Fear not neither be you afraid of them. The Lord God who is your leader, Himself will fight for you, as He did in Egypt in the sight of all. And in the wilderness (as thou hast seen) the Lord, thy God, hath carried thee, as a man is wont to carry his little son, all the way that you have come, until you came to this place."

How touching the picture and how true! A father trudging through the sands of the desert with his child in his arms but faintly portrays the care and love of the Sacred Heart for each one of us to-day in the great Sacrament of the Altar. From His Tabernacle during the long hours of the night, He is the Watchman that neither slumbers nor sleeps, but ever keeps watch over the Israel of our souls and our lives. The poor father of the prodigal did not yearn half so eagerly in days of old for the return of the wanderer, as the Heart of our Blessed Saviour longs for us to come to Him.

After their labors through the long night, in the morning He bade Simon: "Launch out

into the deep." This seemed a strange command and useless. The odds were against it. They were tired and had dragged the Lake during all the hard hours of the storm. Again and again the nets had come up empty. Why delay? Surely there was no hope of success. And lo! scarcely had the nets been dropped into the water than "they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net was breaking." Simon Peter obeyed and his obedience was blessed beyond his wildest expectations. Here a lesson can be learned that will bring into our lives untold peace and strength.

"Launch out into the deep." In our lives and in our work for God we must often hear this same injunction from the lips of our Blessed Saviour. In doing His work there must be no timidity, no fear, no cowardice. Excessive fear even for our personal safety blinds our eyes frequently to real danger, soul danger; at all events it leaves undone much that should be done, misses many opportunities. Boldness in His service, when He commands, is always prudence. The man who waits, watching the clouds and the storm will reap little. Timidity may bring about a sad waste of talent, cause the field to be unharvested. Traffic till He comes, for if through

danger of loss we never traffic, bankruptcy is at our door.

"Launch out into the deep." Fear not; if He commands, we can not fail. No enterprise undertaken through obedience can ever come to naught. It may appear a failure, it may seem frustrated, but done for Him it lives forever and can not die. St. Paul, "a prisoner for the Lord," seemed a failure, buried in his dark cell, dragging his chain behind the iron bars. Hidden were his splendid talents, quiet his resistless energy with no field for his fiery zeal; yet to St. Paul's days in prison, we owe Epistles, which have aided to life innumerable souls. Was there ever seemingly a greater failure than the Master Himself on Good Friday hanging on the cross, yet from that cross He had to hang, if He was to draw all things unto Himself.

THE HILL OF INVITATION

"JESUS came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God." It was a beautiful morning in early Spring when our Lord went out from Capharnaum, the Nazareth of His public life, and made His way along the white shore of the Lake. The sun was climbing above the eastern hills and flashing in dazzling gold upon the waters. At His feet the waves were breaking in long lines of snowy foam; and the fishermen, after their night of toil, were putting in to the shore and washing and repairing their nets.

Not far from the land He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, casting nets into the sea (for they were fishermen). And Jesus said to them: "Come after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men." A strange call this to those two rugged sun-tanned brothers! From childhood they had lived near the water and by their nightly labor upon its bosom they had made their livelihood. To no change had they looked forward, of no respite had they ever had a hope. Yet the words that came to them so persuasively over the waves were to alter the entire current of their lives.

"Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men," was the gracious invitation. They were asked to leave the hard occupation, the storm and calm of the waters of Tiberias, to give up their boats and nets, to separate from their home, to break with the past and its memories, and the hardening of habits which were encrusting about their maturer years; all these were to be dead for them, they were to cast their lot with the Master and be formed by His schooling into "fishers of men." Such was the call that came from the lips of our Blessed Saviour to these simple Galileans that morning on the seashore.

Let us see briefly what this invitation implied. Without doubt it meant that the characteristics of the old life were to be reproduced in the new, the qualities called into play during the long hours of labor for their daily bread were to reappear in the new avocation upon which the Master bade them enter. The work of a fisherman was a tedious, patient toil, calling for the manifold exercise of skill and inventiveness. How true was this to be in the years to come of their quest for souls! If they were to be successful "fishers of men" what patience, skill and tact would be required.

Again, the lot of a fisherman is one in which

there is grinding toil, an element of danger, and success is often beyond his best efforts. Think for a moment of the fisherman out on a stormy night. The wind rushing over the waves comes down upon his boat, every nail and rivet is strained, the mast bent, the sail torn, the waves run high and threatening, and seem about to engulf him. It takes a stout heart not to quail, firm lips not to cry out. Then, too, how often the long, leaden-footed hours drag by and no fish come to the nets; the boats at break of day climb to the crest or drop to the furrow of the waves, empty and light—no spoils of the sea have been captured during the long, weary fishing. Nothing that experience could suggest or skill accomplish has been left undone, and yet they labor all night and catch nothing.

The same is true in the labors of the "fishers of men." Strange fish have to be angled for, strange fish allured to the nets. Think for a moment that it is the souls of men that must be caught, men with bodies that grovel and tend to things that are low and gross; men whose souls reach out to that which is lofty, eternal, divine; men who by their bodies are like the animals in the field, by their spirits approximate to the angels of God. For such

the "fishers of men" must labor, toil and pray. How true, then, it is that the issue seems doubtful and success is beyond human effort and mere natural endeavor! Such was the call that came to Simon and Andrew on the Lakeshore outside of Capharnaum.

Such a call, which in its unlimited sense is found in the life of the priesthood, is addressed to every human soul. We are all fishers of men, whether our nets come up full or empty. No matter how narrow the circle of our acquaintance, no matter how humble and obscure our lot, how circumscribed our opportunities; there are none of us whose lives have not some points of contact with the lives of others. The little monotonous round of our days always brings some, though they may be few, within range of our influence. Now out from the Tabernacle the same words are spoken to each of us: "Come after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men." Not merely to the Apostles but to us as well is His call and invitation addressed. We are singled out to help on in the work both of our own salvation and the salvation of others.

Often, as we kneel at Holy Mass or after Communion, when our Lord is close to us, we feel the stirrings of zeal in our souls, we yearn

to do something to bring men nearer to Him. We should like to make our efforts for His glory effective, we desire to become actually fishers of men whose nets come up not empty but full. We have in our own quiet, unobtrusive way tried little plans and schemes for the winning of souls to the Master. It pains us and disappoints to think that our efforts are unavailing. Yet it ought to be, and it is consoling for us, to reflect that every least striving of ours has an efficacy and power for good; and makes for the spreading of the Master's Kingdom in the hearts of men. There is no such thing as empty nets if we wish them full, no such thing as laboring the night long and catching nothing, if we really want a large draught in our lives.

We never can save souls by merely natural means. Our natural and acquired gifts are utterly inadequate for so high and lofty an undertaking. The salvation of souls took the Blood of Christ, shed even to the last drop, as a purchase price. Can we, then, fancy our poor, puny endeavors equal to the task, unless they be lifted up and vivified by the power of that Blood? Yet that is what it means to be "fishers of men."

However, our Lord has laid down the con-

ditions of success. He has pointed out the way and the method for the filling of the nets. Study for a moment the text in which He promises a blessing on our labor and you will find a condition attached to His promise. He pledges His word to make us "fishers of men," provided we carry out what He requires. The pledge is given conditionally: "I will make you to become fishers of men," provided you "come after Me," or, as another Gospel puts it: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." The condition of success without fear of failure is that we follow Him, walk in His footsteps, use His methods. If we depart from Him, cling to our own ideas, fail to walk in His blood-stained tracks; we, too, shall labor all night and take nothing.

What, then, are the traits that stand out in our Blessed Saviour as a "Fisher of men"? What are the characteristics and salient features that obtrude themselves, so to say, in His public ministry? If we know these and reproduce them in our own lives, then we have our Blessed Saviour's word for it that our toiling shall not be in vain.

Two traits in our Lord's labor for souls are so prominent that even a cursory glance at the Sacred Page reveals them. First, in His public

life He sought not His own but the Father's glory, not His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. From Bethlehem to Calvary, from the manger to the cross, every thought, word and act of His had for its one aim and purpose the Heavenly Father's honor and glory. Here is a spiritual principle which must sink deep into our lives, if our efforts and strivings for souls are to be effective. As long as we labor for self, for our own honor or reputation, we shall be weak, and Heaven's blessings will be far from us. If we keep before our spiritual vision the glory of the Father, and direct our wills to the spreading of the Kingdom of God, if we yearn for souls and their good; we are following our Lord, and success will crown our work. An influence will go out from our lives, no matter how small and insignificant we may think them, to stir human hearts and lift up human souls.

A second characteristic that marked our Lord's dealings with men was His infinite compassion and tenderness for souls. Surely this trait has only to be mentioned to be recognized in thousands of incidents in His life. He was ever ready to relieve bodily infirmity and even spiritual ills. "Seeing the city, He wept over it" as He thought of His rejection by His

people and the future material sufferings and spiritual blindness in the days that were to come. He fed the multitude that had followed Him into the desert, declaring that His heart was moved with compassion for them. The blind knelt at His feet with their sightless eyes upturned to His face, and as He touched those dull, dark orbs, the night fell away and they saw. Magdalene, sin-scarred and stained, flung herself at His feet and wept, and He told her that many sins were forgiven her because she loved much. All through the Gospel it is ever the same touching story of compassion for souls. "The bruised reed He will not crush, nor quench the smoking flax."

Here, then, is another principle to guide us if we desire our influence to tell for the winning of souls. It is kindness and gentleness, not weakness or softness, nor harshness or severity, which gives us a power to draw souls to the Master. Surely there are none of us who do not yearn to do that. We wish to aid our Blessed Saviour to cast into men's hearts the fire He came to enkindle, we long to slake that thirst for souls to which in His dying moments He gave expression on the cross. This sympathy with others in their sorrows, this compassion in their trials and sufferings,

and this tender charity which makes us weep with those whose tears flow, and rejoice with those over whose lips ripple smiles of happiness and success, gives us a power to enter into human lives and to lift them up to higher and nobler purposes. This power enables us not only to dry the tears on the sorrowing cheek, but, what is deeper and better, to wipe away tears that scald the heart and the spirit.

To do this, to go down into the sorrows of other lives and lift the burdens from aching shoulders, is a work of no slight difficulty. To accomplish it we must often kneel before the Tabernacle and study there the kindness and sympathy of our Blessed Saviour's Heart. He is the same to-day as in the days of old on Galilee's hills or by the Lake. From behind the door of His altar-home will come the light into our own darkened spirits that will make us see and realize the sorrows of others and make us forget our own; there will flow from His Sacred Heart into our hearts the strength to take up this work of tenderness and zeal. His grace will lend courage to our drooping spirits and strength to our weak arms. Through it all we shall hear that sweet voice: "Come after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men."

THE HILL OF PLEADING

EVENING had fallen and the sweet notes of the silver trumpet had sung out the advent of the holy day, announcing that all work must cease. And now at dawn all was still along the curving shores of the Lake. The wonted signs of activity, the hurry and the anxiety of the daily routine were absent; for it was the holy Sabbath Day. It was the first Sabbath at Capharnaum since our Lord had called His Apostles "to become fishers of men."

Down from the hills, out from the ravines, and up from the villages, came the worshipers to the services in the synagogue. Among the throng our Lord and His recently called Disciples were found, for St. Mark tells us that "they came into Capharnaum: and forthwith on the Sabbath-day going into the synagogue, He taught them."

Our Blessed Saviour had but a short time previously returned from Jerusalem to Galilee; the contrast between His reception at the Sacred City and the warmth of His welcome in Capharnaum was indeed remarkable. Here there is no secret spying upon His actions, no

envious sifting of His every word. Along the Lake there are none yet to suspect and accuse Him of hidden blasphemy. When He raises His hand in power and compassion over the sick and suffering, no eyes are sharp to see, no lips quick to denounce the Sabbath desecration.

Only a little while before He had spent the holy day at Nazareth. On that memorable occasion He had spoken to His fellow townsmen in words of kindness and affection. He had pictured to their incredulous minds His future mission of sympathy and love. In the language of Isaias He had told them that He had been sent "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to captives, sight to the blind" and other lessons of comfort and hope. In return "all they in the synagogue hearing these things were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust Him out of the city." Such was His reception in the synagogue of His native town.

But this Sabbath morn it is different. For when the people of Capharnaum heard His words and saw His works, there was no question of closing the doors of the synagogue against Him, of banishing Him from the town, or casting Him down from the overhanging

full; but they were filled with wonder and awe, "then came fear upon all, and they talked among themselves saying: 'What word is this, for with authority and power He commanded the unclean spirits and they go out?' And the fame of Him was published in every place of the country."

It was early when our Lord and His Apostles entered the white marble synagogue which glistened in the morning sunlight and from its eminence seemed to guard the Lake like a threatening fortress. Perhaps this synagogue was the gift of the Gentile Centurion in behalf of whose sick servant "the ancients of the Jews" had pleaded with our Saviour saying of him: "He is worthy that Thou shouldst do this for him. For he loveth our nation: and he hath built us a synagogue."

The synagogue was crowded. Many no doubt came that morning from curiosity to hear this new and strange Teacher. For His fame was growing and spreading through the up-country. Numbers had heard of the wonderful deeds and unusual career of this carpenter's Son from Nazareth. The cleansing of the Temple of Jerusalem in the very teeth of the Priests and Pharisees had been rehearsed by the Galilean pilgrims. Some, too,

who had already heard our Blessed Saviour on the hillsides and by the Lake, were eager to listen to Him again. He was no ordinary preacher who taught in dreary stereotyped phrases, in dull conventional formulas. He was not like the Rabbis who of a Sabbath indulged in lifeless truisms; gave cold, long explanations on insignificant trifles, and insisted upon innumerable details. He spoke as no man ever spoke before, spoke a language that was alive with thoughts that uplifted, and kindled holy desires in the souls of His hearers.

All eyes were riveted upon Him as He rose and a deep silence reigned throughout the synagogue. His words were followed with breathless attention, for He uttered a new doctrine in an unwonted manner. Holy Writ says: "They were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes." Suddenly as our Blessed Saviour paused for a moment perhaps, and the attentive Galileans in wonder hung upon His words, suddenly in the house of prayer, rang out the wild cries, hideous shrieks and revolting ravings of a demoniac—a man with an unclean spirit who cried out: "Let us alone, what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I

know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

How touching the scene and how thrilling! The afflicted demoniac though possessed by an unclean spirit seems to have been permitted attendance at the services in the synagogue. Possibly the sacred chant with its memories of other days, and the uplifting prayers may have had a soothing effect upon the man. Friends that loved him and felt for his misfortune may have come with him that day: a loving mother bowed with grief and shame, a father whose cherished hopes for his son had long since been shattered. They too had heard the strange rumors of this new Teacher's wondrous power, but no thought that he would banish from their boy the unclean spirit that tormented him and ruined his life, had suggested itself to their minds.

When, then, those wild cries so familiar to them, rose and drowned every other sound, they were disappointed but not surprised that the sacred rites had failed to exert their soothing influence. Perhaps it may have been months since the poor victim had given any indication of his malady, months since the last paroxysms of fury which had hitherto been frequent. Perhaps the light of hope was be-

ginning to flare up in the sad-faced mother's eyes and the father was eager to patch together the scattered desires of other years for his son's future. But these wild ravings extinguish the light in the mother's face, they kill the new-born hopes in the father's soul.

Above the excitement, disorder and confusion, above the shrieks of fainting women and frightened children, above the noise of the tramping feet of men who wished to restrain and control the unfortunate sufferer—above all can be heard the voice of the Master in tones of power and unmistakable authority saying: "Hold thy peace and go out of him." And at that command from the lips of Him who "is meek and humble," at once "the unclean spirit tearing him, and crying out with a loud voice, went out of him." The scene though thrilling is soon over. A few moments of writhings and contortions, a few instants of frantic resistance and paroxysms of pain, a few louder and fiercer shrieks and cries of anger, and silence and awe pervade the synagogue. The peace and gratitude on the face of the demoniac tell the story of the Master's mercy and love.

"And they were amazed, in so much that they questioned among themselves, saying: 'For with authority He commandeth the un-

clean spirits and they obey Him.'" Over the hills of Galilee at Cana at the marriage feast He had bade the water blush and turn to rich red wine. Later by the Lake He will touch the dull sightless eyes and the shadows will be banished and day break over their darkness for the first time. Ears that have never heard the lapping of the snowy-crested foam or the booming of the waves, will at His voice, listen enchanted to the music of Genesareth's waters on the sandy beach. His white hands will be raised in power and compassion above the heads of the repulsive lepers, and the scales and scabs shall drop away, and they shall be healed. The day is not so far distant when He will say to the wild winds and the surging waves: "Peace, be still," and at His command the threatening billows will be lulled to rest and shrieking winds will be hushed. So to-day on the holy Sabbath in the synagogue, at the sound of that voice the fury of the evil spirits is checked and curbed; and in spite of impotent anger and rage, they instantly loosen the shackles with which they have bound their victim and flee in terror from before the face of "the Holy One of God." Small wonder then that "they were amazed and fear came upon them all."

"And the fame of Him was spread forth

with through all the country of Galilee." The news of this miracle must have spread rapidly, from mouth to mouth, through the villages, hamlets and towns of Galilee. Already our Blessed Saviour's renown was growing because of the marvels He had wrought, and now suddenly it is on every tongue that even the demons are subject to Him. All know of the facts of demoniac possession. It was no unfamiliar sight in those days. The efforts of the Rabbis to bring relief to the unfortunate victim, as all knew, had been ineffectual. Yet suddenly they learn beyond the shadow of a doubt that the carpenter's Son from Nazareth is successfully exercising authority over those possessed and over the evil spirits themselves. The demons who laughed perhaps at the vain efforts of the Priests, obey the voice of this new Teacher and flee from His presence in fear and terror. His simple word banishes them from the bodies where heretofore they have reigned undisturbed and supreme. His voice they must obey, to Him they are subject and bear unwilling testimony. These simple people then were wiser than the Pharisee, when they saw in these wonders, not the power of Beelzebub, but the power of the kingdom of God.

Turning our thoughts in upon our own lives we can be helped and encouraged by this display of our Lord's control over the spirits of darkness. The souls even of the best and most fervent, of those whose lives are purest, motives highest, aims noblest, love warmest, seem at times as if under the influence of the evil one. Thoughts unbidden appear to sully the mind; the imagination is beyond control; the senses long and crave for that which is low and gross; even the will, in which alone there can be sin, seems weak and inclined to that from which we draw back with all our strength. As St. Paul says: "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." We realize with St. Peter that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

At other times the evil spirit of unbelief seems to possess us. Things that before were clear become hazy and indistinct. Truths at one time firmly rooted in our souls grow doubtful and unreal. Mysteries of our faith, which till now have made the music of our lives, are apparently slipping from us and we are drifting from our spiritual moorings away

out upon a stormy sea of doubt and even unbelief. Specious reasons and fallacies which we thought long since dead, spring to life again with a new-born clearness and unsuspected cogency. The whole spiritual world seems so unreal, so different. The journey is so long, so tiresome, so dark. We are so forsaken, so alone. In the firmament there are no stars to deck the sky and light us on our way. As the Psalmist has expressed it: "Thou hast turned away Thy face and I have become sore afraid." At such moments the power of the evil one seems to dominate and control us.

In hours such as these we must hasten to the Tabernacle. On our altars and at the Holy Table is the self-same Master who, that Sabbath morning in Capharnaum, threatened the evil spirit, saying: "Speak no more, and go out of the man." If in these hours of trial and suffering we go to Him and in prayer plead with Him, His power will be exercised just as effectually for our spiritual freedom from temptation, as it was in the synagogue at Capharnaum. If instead of yielding to sadness and depression, if instead of seeking consolation from creatures and the world, its dissipations and amusements, we would, with hearts bruised for our faults and infidelities, turn to

Him in the Tabernacle, we should hear that sweet voice as in days of old on the Lake whispering to us from the altar: "Peace, be still."

THE HILL OF KINDNESS

AFTER the Sabbath morning service during which our Lord had driven the evil spirit from the demoniac, "immediately going out of the synagogue they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John." It was the knowledge that Simon's mother-in-law "lay sick of a fever" that drew our Lord in all probability, to the home of His Apostle on a mission of compassion and charity.

This Sabbath was to be a busy one for our Blessed Saviour and long remembered by the grateful Galileans. About noon-day our Lord and His companions reached the house of Simon Peter. No festive board was spread for His welcome, as Peter's mother-in-law has been "taken with a great fever and they besought Him for her." All is quiet in the cottage with the silence which ever reigns where sickness has entered. The sufferer is flushed and restless, the mouth is dry and the eyes dull and heavy, the fingers are nervously twitching at the counterpane. On the pained face is that calm look of patience and resignation found so often in the faces of the poor.

At our Lord's entrance the whole counte-

nance lit up with joy and hope. The burning heat of the fever was forgotten in the sweetness of His holy presence. "And they besought Him for her." Sickness and suffering never failed to touch a chord of tenderness in the Sacred Heart. In addition to this appeal is now added the prayer to those who were not only the sufferer's friends but our Lord's as well, and they "besought Him for her." What cry for relief has ever gone up to God from human lips and remained unanswered? At the sound of that voice, which calmed the waves and hushed the winds, which only a few moments ago had rebuked the evil one, the sick woman's whole being was stirred, at the touch of that hand which made even the lepers sound, she was instantly restored to all the vigor of health, "and immediately rising she ministered to them."

Can we not find in this ministering to them a type of that unnumbered army in the church which has also generously ministered unto Christ. They have not been able for one reason or another to enter the religious life, to consecrate themselves by the three vows to their Divine Master; this inestimable favor has been denied them. But in many ways they have self-sacrificingly "ministered" unto Him.

The brave girls that toil and give up their hard earnings that brothers may be educated, often for the priesthood, do they not "minister" unto Him? The thousands who sacrifice prospects of marriage that they may devote their lives to aged parents, or spend them in laboring for His poor and about His sanctuary, these brave souls may not hear the music of their own children's voices in their ears, they may not sit in the glow of their own firesides with loved faces round about them; but they minister unto Christ, and in His own good time He will fill their lonely hours with His presence and their hearts with His love. Such lives are braver than the soldier's amid the snapping of bullets on the battlefield; and they should not be made an object of ill-timed joke or gibe, but rather of admiration and esteem. St. John tells us of their dignity: "For they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb." Hence these noble souls are an ornament and glory to the Church.

Nowadays, to listen to people, one might fancy it were wrong to choose a life of single blessedness, to elect a life of virginity. Yet

St. Paul teaches in clear and unmistakable language quite a different doctrine. "He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife: and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." Marriage, it is true, is a holy state blessed by the grace of a special Sacrament; it will always be the common state and should be entered into with holy motives. But there have ever been innumerable souls in the Church who yearn to lead holier, higher, purer lives so as to "minister unto Him." These choose the single life, not because they could not have married, not from any spirit of cowardice, not because they do not appreciate the joys of Catholic motherhood; but because deep down in their souls they hear the Master's call bidding them "minister unto Him." And their ministration takes the form of devotion to feeble parents whose lives they strengthen and brighten against the weakness of old age, and the darkness of the grave.

It is the sweet constraining whisper of the Master telling them: "Amen I say to you, as

long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me," that urges their hearts towards the poor and the orphan. Out from the Tabernacle comes the pleading of the Sacred Heart for the beauty of His Sanctuary; and they have cheerfully answered: "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house, the dwelling-place of Thy glory." To spend themselves in lavish self-sacrifice for the glory of His altar has made the happiness of their lives. The Tabernacle grows into their days; and the glow of the sanctuary lamp is brighter than the glow of earthly fireside, and the whir of unseen Angels' wings sweeter than the sound of children's voices. Such men and women are happy indeed in their works of devotedness and will surely hear from the lips of our Blessed Saviour to whom they have ministered: "Come ye blessed of My Father . . . for I was hungry and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink," and they shall "go into everlasting life" because they have "ministered unto Him."

After the cure of the fever-stricken patient, the Jewish observance of the Sabbath secured for our Blessed Saviour some respite from His toil. The people were not yet free to hearken to the appeals of the sick to be brought to the

feet of the Master. Eagerly they watched the sun hurry behind the heights of Carmel and listened for the notes of the trumpet which announced the close of the holy-day. At length the long day is over, and St. Mark tells us: "When it was evening and when the sun had set, they brought to Him all those who were sick and who had devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door."

What a wondrous scene! It was evening by the Lake, and the Sabbath in the usually unruffled village was closing in unwonted excitement. One by one the silent stars were coming out in the early twilight and were reflected in the still waters; but no fishermen put out to sea that night. The boats, tied securely to the stakes, were rising and falling with the swell of the waves. From house to house had sped the rumor of the cure of the demoniac and of Simon's mother-in-law, and that the Prophet was curing all who were brought to Him at Peter's home.

Out from the doors of the cottages the sick and infirm are borne by loving and willing hands. The long procession wends its way towards the Great Healer, the street is lined with cots and pallets from which issue groans and sighs of pain. Eyes that were dull and

hollow are now bright with hope. Cheeks that were pale and sunken are now flushed with expectation of relief from suffering. Smiles of joy have replaced the tears of despair. The clouds of sorrow that have hung over cheerless firesides will soon be dispersed, for at last the words of Isaias are being fulfilled: "In that day the deaf shall hear, and out of darkness and obscurity the eyes of the blind shall see, and the meek shall increase their joy, and the poor men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

On moves the procession and one by one the sick are laid before Him. No disease is too desperate, no pain too sharp, no suffering too deep-rooted, to resist the power of His healing word or touch. On they come with their loved ones, the jewels and treasures they had almost lost. Far on into the night they continue to lay their loved burdens of sorrow at His feet, and from His glance and word and hand go out strength, comfort and surcease of pain.

Among the throng that crowds about Him there was a sad-hearted mother with her little daughter, who had been blind since birth. Four years had passed since the little one came into her life in the cottage by

the Lake. The child had never seen the sun rise over the eastern hills nor the spring blossoms on the hillside, nor the glistening snows on Lebanon's mountains in the north. She knew the sad tones of mother's voice, she loved to hear her footsteps, and to feel her smooth, tear-stained face; but she had never looked into the light of her mother's sorrowing eyes. That evening there was a new hope in the sad heart. Placing the child at His feet, she looked into His face and no pleading could have been more eloquent. Over those darkened eyes was gently stretched the white hand of the tender Master, darkness fell away, and the child looked up and saw for the first time the smile of love.

At the door of Simon's house stood a strong, rugged fisherman with a boy in his brawny arms. On the Apostle's lips there was a welcome. His story was sad and pathetic. Early in his happy married days God had given him a young son to draw him and his wife closer in their love, and to rejoice the little home that overlooked the waters. But an unfortunate accident in babyhood had made his child a cripple from the cradle. The years slowly rolled away, and the paralysis which, it was said, would weaken with his years, seemed to

tighten and grow firmer. Alas for that father's dreams! Then, the mother of his boy passed away and the final parting was the harder because of the helpless condition of their son.

This evening, however, hope, long since dead in the sad father's heart, had sprung into new life. The heavy pain so long familiar to him seemed to be relieved as he looked up into the face of our Blessed Saviour in the deepening darkness. From his lips comes the prayer welling up from a distressed and lonely life: "Oh, Master, heal my boy." Raising that hand which had just lifted the black curtain from off the eyes of the child born blind, Jesus smiled lovingly into the face of the anxious father, then He blessed the boy and instantly the wasted and withered little limbs straightened and strengthened, the nervous contortions ceased, the child was cured. That night in the soul of the happy father there was but one wish to make his joy full—that the mother who was sleeping in the hillside could have lived to see the child in all the flush and bloom of new-born health. Thus into the night went on the deeds of mercy and compassion; so that the Evangelist could describe the scene fittingly only in the words of Isaias: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Into all homes come, sooner or later, suffering and sorrow. Full often pain and grief are interwoven with the lives of those we love and with our own. There were more tears than smiles in Mary's life and in the lives of those closest to the Sacred Heart. Small wonder, then, if we strive to give our Lord our best, that our portion should be like unto His own and His Blessed Mother's. Yet it is hard to bear the cross, to smile with tears on our cheeks. Any one can be brave in time of peace, but courage is best displayed amid the din and dust and grime of battle. Into the home where the father is the bread-winner, sickness enters and prostrates him on a bed of illness. Who can tell his anguish as he hears his children cry for bread and sees them shiver from the cold? Only Christ's entrance into that house can strengthen and console the sufferer. The mill-girl half deaf from the clacking of the loom and half-suffocated by the dust, feels her strength surely ebbing away. At home medicines must be bought for a dying mother and the doctor paid in advance; but she is brave, because our Lord comes into her life in frequent Communion. And so it is with every trial of life, with every sorrow and with every grief; though all else

fail us, there is One who is ever true, ever loving. But like the Jews on that Sabbath evening, we must go to Him; go to Him in our weakness for strength, in our blindness for light, in our cowardice for courage and stoutness of heart; go to Him in all our diseases. He is ever in the Tabernacle, as He was in days of old in Peter's house, to cure our ills, bodily and spiritual. Let us remember that what was true of other days is true to-day of the Great Healer in the dwelling-place of His choice, the altar. "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongues of the dumb shall be free: for waters are broken out of the desert, and streams in the wilderness." This is the story of the Great Physician in His Tabernacle-home.

THE INLAND HILLS

OUR Lord left Capharnaum and went inland among the hills of Galilee. A wondrous story of compassion and love is told by the Evangelists of His tarrying there. From His lips flowed as usual words of wisdom and comfort, and from His touch healing and health. As He approached through the hills one of the inland cities—"a certain city," St. Luke calls it,—"behold a man full of leprosy, who seeing Jesus, and falling on his face, besought Him, saying: 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' "

That cry of suffering and agony, like every cry of suffering which goes up from the tortured human heart to the tender Heart of Christ, found an immediate answer, for "stretching forth His hand, He touched him, saying," in tones gentler than a mother's loving whisper over her sick child: 'I will. Be thou clean.' And immediately the leprosy departed from him." The corruption stopped, the scales fell away, the blood thickened and the flush of health mantled his cheeks; once more the buoyancy and strength of other days came back to him.

How sad the story of that poor victim of the dreaded and loathsome disease! Perhaps the afflicted leper had been born in Galilee and had spent his earlier years on one of the rounded hills almost within sight and sound of the sea. From boyish days to manhood's strength his toil may have been among the vineyards or along his native olive and fig-grown slopes. Many an evening he may have watched the sun with dying rays stealing through the wooded heights of Thabor, destined one day to be lit up with the radiance from the Master's shining countenance. The thought of the glories of his people and of the Temple had often occurred to him as he saw the dark cedars of Lebanon silhouetted "like giants of eld" against a sun-touched sky. The Lake, too, and its busy shore were familiar; for no doubt with pleasant companions he will have taken an occasional holiday on its bosom and along its sandy beach.

Perhaps it was by the Lake that he first met the Jewish maiden, whose heart and hand he had won and who had willingly consented to be the faithful companion of his sorrows and his joys. Their early married years had passed rapidly away in their cottage on the hillside. Clouds of sorrow had rolled about their home,

but they had never lingered by their fireside, now brightened by the smiles of growing children. The music on the Sabbath in the synagogue, or in the Temple at the Passover, was not so sweet as the music of the loved ones' voices within his simple happy home.

On into the coming years that grateful father looked and in the distant vista he could see no shadows across the path. Old age could have no terrors for him and its feebleness no fears. Would not the loved ones now growing round about him provide for him and his loved companion in old age, and would they not then be a strong staff upon which the father and mother could lean and find support? Had he not often meditated in the synagogue the words of Holy Writ: "All expect of Thee that Thou givest them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall be all filled with good"? Why then should he allow vain fears to flit across his mind and darken with misgiving his bright and thankful spirit?

But, alas, a dark sorrow fell with unexpected suddenness over that bright life. One evening, returning from his long day of toil among the vineyards, the father complained

of feeling listless, tired and feverish. His face was flushed, his eyes were dim. There were anxious looks on the countenance of his loved ones, and words of sympathy and affection and cheering wishes of hope were not wanting. But the wishes were not to be realized for many a day. That night the patient tossed upon a bed of fever, and before day broke over the Lake and flushed the hills with light, his suspicions were verified; he could no longer doubt the evidences of his senses; he was cursed; he was a leper.

Early at the dawn at the sound of a silent, anxious footfall towards his door, through the quiet cottage out from his chamber rang the agonizing, despairing cry: "Unclean, unclean"; and his loved ones, with hearts frozen with terror, understood that their father was a leper. He would be banished from human haunts and exiled out to the wild hills, where he would be an outcast from his fellow-men; his home would be lonely and shattered.

From the holy synagogue even before the morning prayers the priest hurries to the bedside and pronounces sentence. How can he be gentle when the God of Abraham has uttered a malediction? How expect words of sympathy from him when the God of their nation hates

and punishes? No fond embrace may the leper bestow upon the companion of all his years. He may not bid farewell to his little ones with a parting kiss lest he communicate the foul disease, but muttering through leather-covered lips, "Unclean, unclean," in an agony of despair, he hastens from his home to the cheerless arid hills away from the sight and sound of human beings.

Oh! the bitterness of the separation and the keenness of the grief that crushed to earth those loving and united hearts. No wonder the cry that rang out by the roadside touched the Heart of our Blessed Saviour. The smiles which had rippled over joyous faces were now changed to constant and bitter tears. Loneliness and pain and compassion took the place of the merry laughter and songs of other days. How willingly they would have borne their father's dead body to a welcome grave in the hillside and have laid it away tenderly and thankfully, if such a sacrifice had been required! Far preferable had death and the grave been to the long years of a living death in wretchedness, suffering and despair, and in the unrelenting grip of this loathsome disease.

Sad now, indeed, is that once happy family. Wrinkles begin to cut deep lines in the smooth

forehead of the lonely mother. The bloom of youth flies from the faces of the children, and, bent and haggard from grief, age seems to settle on their young lives long before the time. Untilled and idle now lie the fields and no furrows from the plough are run through their bosom; for the hands that guided the plough are helpless and decaying. Poverty, gaunt and cruel, now sits at the door, where but yesterday there was plenty. But sadder is the lot of the banished and exiled father. From the bleak hilltops he can see the home he may not enter, the fields he may not till. For the sight and companionship of his loved ones his heart yearns and hungers, yet nigh unto them he may not approach. At the slightest sound of the approach of a human being he must flee in haste like a timid animal and cry aloud in warning, "Unclean, unclean."

And so the slow, lonely days pass, with despair wrapping his soul more tightly. Deeper and deeper into his flesh the loathsome disease is eating and biting, as rust eats into the iron. No hope of cure ever breaks over his darkened soul to cheer with a single ray his crushed and broken spirit.

One day, a strange rumor goes through the hills. So widespread and marvelous is the

news that it reaches even the outcast leper. There is a new Teacher in Galilee, a man "powerful in word and work." Wonders are wrought by Him equal to the deeds of the Prophets and the Holy ones of other days. When he is told that "Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity," a spark of hope kindles in his soul. Faith in the power of the new Prophet fans the spark into a flame.

From his lonely hilltop he scans with eager, anxious gaze the long white road that stretches on towards the Lake. Day by day he looks out towards the distant hills. He knows that, if the Master would only pass by, his cry of agony would be heard and he would be made clean. Do his eyes deceive him? Is it his hope which peoples the road with a moving throng? No, it is no imagination. The multitude is surely approaching. He can see their faces, can hear the hum and buzz of human voices and the tramp and thud of falling feet. The attention of all seems riveted upon the countenance of one of gracious mien. Surely He is the Master. With the wild cry, "Unclean, unclean," issuing from his lips, he rushes

from his hiding-place. Back surges the crowd in fear and terror of the leper and makes a passage through which the leper totters; falling at our Saviour's feet and, for very shame at his loathsome appearance, bowing his face to the ground, he murmurs in the dust: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." With a look of tenderness in His eyes and a smile of welcome upon His lips, "stretching forth His hand He touched him, saying: 'I will. Be thou cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy departed from him."

His prayer was heard, his petition granted. But upon him our Lord laid two injunctions: "See that thou tell no man, but go, show thyself to the High Priest." As well bid the sea in storm not to break against the rocky coast, as well command the stars not to shine like jewels in the velvet vaults of heaven, as well tell the restless human heart not to throb, or pulse not to beat, as to enjoin on those thankful lips not to proclaim the mercy and kindness of his Benefactor and the marvel wrought for his healing. "But he being gone out, began to publish and to blaze abroad the word." No doubt he presented himself to the High Priest, so that he might be declared free of the disease and have the ban lifted which barred him

from his dear ones. That night in the once lonely cottage the tears were dried, for the loved father who was dead had come to life again.

There is a moral as well as a physical leprosy, a leprosy of the soul as well as of the body. The foul disease, which we know as mortal sin, renders the soul much more revolting, loathsome and disgusting than does any physical disfigurement affect our material bodies. It not only corrodes and corrupts the soul in God's sight and makes it hideous and repulsive; it destroys all supernatural life and makes the soul lie dead—as dead to the spiritual life as the festering corpses and mouldering bones are dead to the natural life that at one time thrilled and animated them. The leper was banished from the homes and haunts of men, cut off, as much as possible, from all communication with those dear to him. No matter how close the ties, no matter how intimate the bonds that knit human hearts together, no matter how warm the love or tender the affection in human lives, once the man was declared a leper there was no power that could prevent the sentence of banishment and exile. To the dreary solitude he must go with the leathern

"Be thou cleansed"

thong over his lips and must cry out: "Unclean, unclean," to ward off any approach of his fellow-men.

So the soul stricken with the leprosy of mortal sin is cast out from God's favor and love. It is stripped of the sanctifying grace merited for it by the blood of Christ, and is deprived of all right to the Kingdom of Heaven. In that condition it can never look upon the face of God, but will be banished from the Heavenly Tabernacle just as surely as the leper Jew of old was banished from his home and family.

On certain days the lepers were marked so as to be known. They were kept huddled together so that the disease might not be communicated and spread. But unfortunately there is often no visible sign by which we can recognize the moral lepers whose very breath is spiritual defilement and death. Some, however, are easily known and detected. The men who selfishly leave their weekly wages in saloons and let the family hunger and shiver; the men who with empty laughter tell the foul story or suggestive joke that brings the blush of shame to modest cheeks; the father whose children hear him curse but never see him pray; those who prefer the Sunday papers to

the Sunday Mass; the parents who send their children to non-Catholic schools; the critic of, but no contributor to, Catholic education; the worldly mothers who will marry their daughters to men not of their faith, for the sake of social prestige; the women who through love of dress embarrass their husbands and family with debt; women who are cruel to their servants and men who defraud the laborer of his wages, these and hundreds of others are tainted, and unless very much on their guard will soon be like the man in the Gospel, "full of leprosy."

What is the cure, what the remedy? How are these to be made whole and clean? We read in St. Luke that "stretching forth His hand He touched him." It is from the touch of Christ that healing must go out into the lives of moral lepers. The poor man in the Gospel came in all his loathsomeness, in all his deformity, and in very shame hid his face in the dust. Our Blessed Saviour did not draw back at the repulsive object that lay at His feet, did not reject his petition or refuse his prayer, but with divine condescension "stretching forth His hand He touched Him" and health and soundness and beauty once more reappeared and took possession of that half-

decayed and corrupting body. So it must be with those afflicted with spiritual leprosy. No matter how repulsive they may be, no matter how hideous, there is only one cure, to throw themselves in the dust in humility and confidence, and it will be true of them as it was of the leper "and stretching forth His hand, He touched him, saying: 'I will. Be thou cleansed.'" It is our comfort to believe that this is true in the spiritual sense in the Tribunal of Penance just as it was in the material sense two thousand years ago on Galilee's hills.

We must not forget that the same kind Saviour who brought health and happiness to the leper is ever with us on our altars. The poor woman in the Gospel said that, if she could but touch the hem of His garment she would be cured. She did touch that garment and her faith was rewarded. What, then, ought to be the effect of Holy Communion in our lives when into our very being comes not a type, a symbol, or a figure, but the reality, the Body and Blood of our Divine Master? Surely in souls to which He comes there can be no leprosy. On the contrary, from the touch of that Sacred Body not only will there be spiritual healing, but more light will flood our souls and our spiritual vision will be wid-

ened and our sight become more keen. A newer and a fuller supernatural life will be infused into our souls. From the waters will flow out into our hearts fuller strength, a braver courage, a greater energy. That divine touch will not only chasten and purify, but will lift us up to higher aims, nobler purposes, loftier motives, more generous deeds. It will make us strong with His strength, brave with His courage. If this be true, and it is, why are we such cowards in the spiritual struggle? Surely it is not our Master's fault.

THE HILL OF RETIREMENT

AFTER the cure of the leper our Lord spent some time in the desert. "He could not openly go into the city, but was without in desert places, and they flocked to Him from all sides." St. Luke says that "He retired into the desert and prayed." While still continuing His teaching and His ministrations of kindness and mercy, He was anxious to remain in retirement for a time at least, so that by shunning publicity, the envy and jealousy of the Priests, Scribes and Pharisees might not be aroused. The leper whom He had cured was, He knew, on his way to the Holy City, and until his healing had been officially sanctioned it would seem more prudent for our Blessed Saviour to remain in seclusion.

Moreover, our Lord may have wished that the cure of the leper should become more widely known and that such a marvel of power and tenderness should sink more deeply into the minds of the people. No healing of the dread disease had taken place in Israel since the days when Eliseus had said to Naaman: "Go and wash seven times in the

Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be clean." Nothing was dearer to the Heart of Jesus than that as an effect of the leper's healing the people should acknowledge with Naaman: "In truth, I know there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel." This miracle was important not only as a symbol of the cleansing of the soul, but also as a preparation for the claim He was soon to make of the power to forgive. If some time was given for the news of this marvelous deed to circulate through the towns and hamlets, men's minds would be more ready to accept a teaching which would test their faith to the utmost limit.

Then, too, it was not unusual for our Blessed Lord to go apart and devote Himself to communion with His Father at periods of special importance in His Ministry. Incidents of moment in His life were approached and carried out by Him in an atmosphere of special prayer and intercourse with God. The Apostles, for example, were selected from the seventy-two disciples only after He had passed the night on the mountain-top in prayer. He had spent the night in holy contemplation before coming down from the cliffs at the dawn, crossing the water, and

promising the great gift of His Body and His Blood to the children of men. On the eve of His Passion with the vision of Calvary before His blood-stained eyes, He had battled and agonized in prayer under the olives of Gethsemani. So, too, in the present instance. It was the eve, almost, of His claims to be able to forgive sins; He had just disposed the people for the acceptance of His divine prerogative by a miracle that strikingly symbolized the cleansing of the soul. What more natural than that He should retire to commune with His Heavenly Father in solitude and prayer?

What can be more profitable, what more helpful for our own souls than short periods of retirement? What fraught with more good for our higher interests and spiritual welfare than some time given regularly to seclusion and union with God? Even the prophet Jeremias centuries ago realized this when he lamented: "With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart." Never perhaps was this practice of going apart from time to time to consider in the heart the things that are for our peace, more necessary than at the present.

Our lives are lived in such a rush and with

such rapidity. All is hurry and motion. Bare existence is sustained and its needs secured only by constant work, friction and competition. So absorbed are we in the welfare of the body that there is no time for the welfare of the spirit; so occupied in things of earth, there is no leisure for things of eternity. Health, talent, energy are so fully employed in the quest for the treasures of earth that very little thought is taken of the treasures which are beyond. Many give this as an excuse for the neglect of their spiritual interests, and yet our Lord has pointed out very clearly that this excuse is vain: "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more you, O ye of little faith!"

For the poor the constant, anxious struggle for daily bread might be a reason, if not an excuse, for this neglect of spiritual opportunities. Yet it is the poor who are heroically faithful and self-sacrificing in profiting by special occasions of grace. Who attend the missions, tridua and novenas in our parishes?

Who are they who weekly and daily gather round the altar to nourish their souls on the Bread of Life? Ask the sunken-cheeked, half-deaf mill-girl whence comes her strength to stand her life of grinding toil, and many a one will tell you it is from her daily Mass and Communion. Go among the hard-worked Catholic women in our department stores, where the hours are long, the work wearing and the wages low; go out among our Catholic men who run our trolleys, or toil in the heat before the blast-furnaces; go into any walk of life among our Catholic poor, ask them how they stand the grinding toil, the fatigue, the hopeless outlook for the future. There is only one answer. They go into the desert with the Master by their morning and evening prayers, by their fervent aspirations in moments of temptation, by their presence at Holy Mass and their approach to the altar. They who crowd our churches in a spirit of faith realize practically the meaning of our Lord's words: "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." And as our Blessed Saviour showed His love for those who thronged about Him in the desert, so now no tongue can tell His love for the faith-

ful poor who throng round His Tabernacle. What a blessing poverty becomes when it draws us to the Heart of Him who being infinitely rich became poor for our strengthening and our love!

But when our Lord whispers to human souls: "Come apart into a desert place and rest a while," what excuse can our well-to-do Catholic offer for not listening? Those whom God has blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, whose lives are not harried by anxieties and worries for their daily needs, what reason can they offer for not attending to so blessed a call? Thousands of the faithful whom God has blessed with this world's goods, hear and obey the voice of Christ inviting to the practice of their faith. They appreciate their religion and avail themselves of its advantages and privileges. Morning and evening prayers, Holy Mass, reception of the Sacraments, the devotions of the Church, all these mean much to them and are factors in their lives. The wealth that the moth can consume has not blinded their eyes to the value of the riches which no moth can consume, no robber steal away.

But there are others, increasing, too, in numbers it is to be feared, for whom wealth

has become a stumbling-block and even a curse. In many Catholic lives there is little or no prayer—at most an infrequent Communion, a short Mass on Sunday, and this only when they can not find an excuse for absence. Missions they think are for the servants; tridua and novenas for the devout and pious; in general, extra spiritual exercises find little or no place in their thoughts, make no appeal to their needy souls. If bodily nourishment was partaken of with as little relish—which is far from being the case—and in the same infinitesimal quantities, such people would be anaemic in a week, and dead of starvation in a month.

How sad and untrue their excuse for this spiritual neglect! "There is no time," we are told, "for so many religious exercises." No time for prayer in a Catholic life! There is no time for anything else till the duty of prayer has been fulfilled and ample provision made for the needs of our souls redeemed by Christ's blood. Have we not our Blessed Saviour's own words: "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" Yet in the face of this testimony they have no

time. This excuse sounds very much like the pleas of those who did not sit down at the feast mentioned in the Gospel.

"No time," they say. Yet how their lives are frittered away! What a sad waste of that which is most precious! Time is most valuable, for with it we can merit eternity. It is doled out to us moment by moment, lest an instant of it be misused or lost. It is in time that souls are saved, it was in time that the Blood of our Blessed Saviour was shed for their redeeming. "No time!" Yet the people who can rarely spare a moment for their spiritual welfare, for a prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, for a visit to the Lady Altar, for a rosary said at their bedside at night, are the very ones who can find leisure for long hours at bridge, for bowing down and burning incense at social functions, for useless and prolonged calls and visits; and for junketing and feasting far on into the night, when it would be safer for them, better for their children and family, were they at home giving their attention to domestic and family duties.

"No time!" If only a portion of the long hours consumed before their mirrors in personal adornment and admiration were given

to self-examination before the crucifix, what a change would be wrought in their lives! What with social functions absorbing their thoughts and their energies, with long hours lazily spent in bed till far on into the day, with the languid hours lost in vulgar outdoor display of dress, what with all this and much else that is repulsive and even sinful, can we wonder that they find prayer tedious and the shortest devotions too long and too frequent? How can there be any development of spiritual instincts, in lives filled with excessive self-indulgence which darkens the mind, dulls and deadens the supernatural perceptions and stifles all higher impulses. Thank God, these excesses are not so common among our wealthy Catholics; yet they are of sufficient frequency to become a matter of comment and scandal.

How sad such houses—they can not be called homes! How pitiable the lot of the children! The whole manner of life is often worldly, vain, self-indulgent, pretentious and exclusive. This is the atmosphere that envelopes them, which their children breathe from the cradle. This coldness and indifference to religious duties and practices chills the small current of faith that flows into the

pace in everything that is honest, pure and noble. Religious belief is slipping away from many men's minds. We must not go down to their level, but by our lives lift them up to ours. To do this we must speak and act from the abundance of the heart, if we are to touch the hearts of others. The spiritual principles that guide and actuate us must be no passing emotion, no transitory sentiment, no shallow, ephemeral feeling, but they must be deep and precious convictions rooted in our souls by God's grace and habitual prayer. The fine flowers of Catholic chivalry and virtues are the outcome of patient culture before the Tabernacle and of daily practice with the image of Calvary before our eyes. Only weeds grow without planting and without cultivation.

Finally, nothing short of a serious retreat can set right many disordered lives and correct false standards and bearings. Yes, a retreat and serious prayer with frequent reception of Holy Communion. A delicate watch out of order is not accurately readjusted by jewelling the case, nor can an organ be tuned by painting the pipes. The true worker puts the quality of his life into all his service. The painter toils and the musician

"Arise take up thy bed and walk"

plays with his very soul; so with the true, earnest Catholic, heart and soul must be put into the daily practice of his faith; this can not be done without going apart from time to time and kneeling in prayer before the crucifix and the Tabernacle.

THE HILLS OF CAPHARNAUM

WHILE the news of the cure of the leper was passing through the villages and hamlets of Galilee and was sinking into the minds of the people, Jesus "entered again into Capharnaum after some days." During these days "He retired into the desert and prayed."

Naturally our Blessed Saviour made His way to the house of Simon Peter, where His recent healing of Peter's mother-in-law secured for Him in that quiet home a warm welcome and every loving attention. Instantly the news of His return spreading through the town, the multitude flocked out to hear and see Him, as St. Mark tells us: "It was heard that He was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room, no, not even at the door, and He spoke to them the word."

The scene is pictured for us by St. Luke in fuller detail. "And it came to pass on a certain day, as He sat teaching, that there were also Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, that were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, and the

power of the Lord was to heal them." The gathering was surely impressive and unusual. So far in His ministry, with the exception of two incidents earlier in His career, our Lord had met with little or no opposition. As yet no envy on the part of Scribe, Pharisee or Priest had manifested itself. Spying upon His actions and life, efforts to entrap Him in His speech, jealousy of His growing popularity were developments of a later period. Up to the present there was no open conflict with the religious authorities, who were not yet noticeably ranged against Him. We can conclude, then, that so large and mixed an assemblage was an indication of the spread of the news of the leper's healing as well as a proof of the growing reputation of the Man-God and the increasing fame of His teaching.

The unusual scene is easily described. The house of Simon is thronged to the door and every nook and corner occupied by eager witnesses and expectant listeners. Under a covered gallery that surrounds a courtyard which can be reached from the various apartments of the house, our Lord is standing and addressing the people. Both under the porch and without, filling the entire court, the multitude is densely packed. The places of honor

near the speaker have been accorded to the visitors, especially to those of superior rank or position. The ordinary people of the town, many of whom have already seen, and even experienced in their own lives, evidences of His power and kindness, are no less eager to be within easy range of His voice. They, too, have crowded in to hear and see Him, and so great and dense is the multitude that it overflows into the street and blocks all access to His presence through the ordinary doors.

But there was one poor sufferer who, together with his friends, was determined to reach the Master. A wasted and emaciated paralytic, who perhaps had missed the opportunity of begging health from our Blessed Saviour the last time He had tarried by the Lake, was now determined, ill and helpless as he was, to plead for strength and healing. He felt that the One who never turned a deaf ear to any human cry of pain, or refused to solace and comfort any agony of the human heart, would not deny his petition.

For years the brave and patient paralytic had been a helpless sufferer on his couch of pain. Perhaps he had often rebelled at his sad fate and envied the strong and robust health of the friends who in their charity had

visited him in the hope of cheering his weary hours and of bringing some comfort to his saddened life. A devoted wife and loving children vied with each other in tender attention and affectionate service, but the sight of their want and destitution, which the most ingenious devices failed to conceal, did but serve to accentuate his dependent condition and add more bitterness to his cup of sorrow.

As time had gone on the clouds of black despair had deepened and they now hung heavy and thick over his soul. There had been hours when his dull eyes had brightened under the comforting hope of health and strength, hours when it seemed to him that as the days wore on there was some slight and almost imperceptible change for the better in his condition, but a night of painful agony would soon shatter such thought and leave him looking forward, again hopeless, into all the dark, dreary years of unmitigated suffering. Those near him tried to conceal his condition, but the smiles died out on the faces of his loved ones and the silent tears on their pallid and wan cheeks confirmed his own worst fears for the future.

But the day came when the story of the leper's healing passed from lip to lip in Cap-

harnaum. Men stood in the corners of the streets and at the docks by the Lake and spoke of the rumor of such a cure. Some denied and laughed at so wild a report, others believed, until finally so clear was the evidence that all admitted the fact. Into the house of sorrow and tears the wonderful news found its way in whispers, till at last our invalid realized the marvel which had happened to the poor loathsome leper out amid the hills. Hope, which had long since been dead, came to life again, the dark clouds of despair began to break, and after the long, dreary night the faintest glimmer of dawn appeared, which was to grow till the full light of hope would flood his soul. Oh, if the Master would only return to Capharnaum! Surely if he asked, might he not look for kindness and mercy? He had cured the mother-in-law of Simon, He had banished the demon from the poor possessed boy, would He turn a deaf ear to his cry and not hearken to the clamorous pleadings of his little ones? His heart told him, and told him truly, that his prayer would be granted.

How he yearned for the return of our Blessed Saviour from the inland hills! Though the days dragged by slowly, still they were

not so long and depressing, and even the stings and twitches of pain could be borne with serener resignation and cheerfulness, while impatient murmurs grew silent and died on his lips, for the spark of hope, long since extinguished, had been relit in his soul.

At last the Master had finished His prayerful sojourn in the desert and turned His face once more towards the Lake. Already Priests and Pharisees from various parts had gathered into the town to meet Him and study His strange life and teaching. So when our Lord came to the house of Simon, willing and sympathetic friends were not wanting to bear this precious burden of pain to the scene of the Master's activity. Access to Him, however, seemed impossible, so great was the ardent and enthusiastic crowd that had gathered from far and near and was pressing on every side to see and hear him. Will his friends give over the charitable design of carrying him into the presence of the Great Physician? Will they bid him wait a more opportune moment, a more propitious occasion? Any such intention to desist would readily yield to the agonized look on the face of the sufferer and to the pitiful sighs and pleas which break from his lips. Once more, then, lifting the

cot they carefully and laboriously make their way up an outside stairs to the roof of the house in which our Blessed Saviour is teaching. Removing tiles from the roof, an opening is quickly made and the sick man on his pallet is gradually lowered and laid at the feet of our Blessed Saviour. Thus does prayer, when earnest, sincere and determined, overcome natural and apparently insurmountable obstacles.

"And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, 'Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'" Every eye was fixed upon our Blessed Saviour and a deep silence fell upon the throng. The pale, anxious face of the fevered paralytic had upon it a look of longing, yearning hope. To his lips no words came expressive of the deep desire in his soul. But there is no prayer in the human heart so profound, no prayer so silent that it can escape the loving knowledge of Him who reads the souls of men. In response, then, to the prayer of the paralytic, which though silent, shone out from his eyes, in answer to the strong faith of the kind friends who had borne him from his house to the sacred presence where he looked for healing, our Lord grants, as He usually does, even more than is asked,

for in tones more soothing than a mother's caress He said: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Instantly the secret jealousy of the Scribes and Pharisees was aroused and took alarm, disguising itself under the cloak of zeal for God's attributes. "And the Scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying: 'Who is this who speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sin but God alone?'" Our Lord read their innermost thoughts, saw the indignation depicted on their countenances and the interchange of glances which passed from one to the other. In a sense there was truth in their thoughts, for no one but God can forgive sin. Sin is an act of rebellion of the creature against the Creator, it is an offense against the Divine Majesty, and only God Himself can restore to His favor and love those who insult and dishonor Him. In the old Dispensation there was neither Priest, nor Prophet, nor saint who could forgive sins. Our Lord's answer and the reading of their thoughts proved that He was Divine or at least that God was with Him when He told the palsied sufferer that his sins were forgiven him. The manifestation of unusual knowledge in discerning the secrets of hearts

gave strength to His declaration that He had pardoned the sins of the paralytic.

But now our Blessed Saviour is about to give them a desired proof of the power which He said was His. So far they had received proofs sufficient to have at least inclined them to believe His word even when He laid claim to supernatural powers. Not long ago He had exorcised the demoniac in their synagogue in this very town. At His command the fever had left the mother-in-law of Simon and she had risen from her bed of sorrow and ministered unto Him. Only a few weeks before, the stricken leper had fallen at His feet, and the scales, touched by His sacred hand, had dropped away, the corruption had ceased, while the strength of earlier years came back to him and he was made clean. These events, which had happened under their own eyes, ought to have precluded the charge of blasphemy which was in their thoughts.

Now however, in His kindness and condescension He makes good His claim. Looking down into the face of the sufferer on the pallet at His feet and reading in that face the hope of healing, He turned to the Scribes and Pharisees and said: "Why think you

these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' or to say, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.'" "And immediately he arose, and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered, and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw the like.'"

Our Lord had required them to believe that He possessed and exercised the power of forgiving sins. He had told the paralytic "thy sins are forgiven thee." The Scribes and Pharisees had judged Him guilty of blasphemy. Now in proof of His claim in the spiritual world, He works an astounding miracle in the world of sense. The effect of His pardon on the soul of the paralytic they could not see; any one who would, could utter the words of pardon and there was no possibility of ascertaining their effectiveness. But at His command the helpless invalid feels the strength of other days come back to him, he perceives the flush of reawakened health in his body, and enjoys once more the strength

and vigor that had long since vanished from his palsied limbs. Who, then, can question that at His bidding the sins had been pardoned and blotted out? Small wonder that the Evangelist tells us: "All were astonished and they glorified God, and they were filled with fear, saying: 'We have seen wonderful things to-day.'"

The multitude marvelled at the power manifested at Cana in Galilee when the water was changed into wine. On the lake shore Jesus multiplied the loaves, and the people in their gratitude wished to make Him King. These miracles have ever been regarded in the Church as symbolical of the Holy Mass and the august mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. In like manner the cure of the paralytic and the solemn assurance from our Lord's blessed lips that his sins were forgiven have ever been taken in the Church as a figure and type of the healing of the palsied spirit. If on that day in Capharnaum "all were astonished and glorified God," what must be the wonder of God's angels as they witness in the Sacrament of Penance the healing of tens of thousands of spiritual paralytics that are laid by His impelling grace every day at His feet in that tribunal of mercy and pardon? Who can tell

the number from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who find the strength and comfort and healing foreshadowed that day when the paralytic was bidden to arise and take up his bed and return to his home?

On down through the ages and through the life of the Church this Divine Sacrament has been a fountain of courage, purity and spiritual strength. No child of Adam has ever approached overburdened and weighed down by sin and sorrow, but the sin has been washed away and the sorrow lifted from the suffering soul. Men and women have knelt with tears of repentance on their cheeks, and those tears have been replaced by smiles of confidence; for they know that the past is blotted out and forgiven. At the feet of our Blessed Saviour, to the returning sinner there is naught but kindness, pardon and love: "The bruised reed He shall not break and the smoking flax He shall not quench."

All down the ages the same familiar, consoling scenes of old have ever continued to be reenacted, as those which took place in the days when our Lord lingered lovingly with the children of men. Magdalenes without number, sinful and sorrowful, more sinned against than sinning, have knelt at His feet

and with upturned faces have looked into His eyes, and each and every one has heard in tones sweeter than any earthly music, the self-same words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Over myriads of bruised and broken hearts that have been prostrate before Him in His ministers the same sentence of loving forgiveness has been pronounced as lived upon His lips centuries ago on the Temple steps of Jerusalem: "Neither shall I condemn thee." Who can tell the number of darkened spirits who, in their last moments, with death in all its terrors naked before them, have been dragged back from the precipice of hopeless despair by the assurance of our expiring Saviour coming to them from the lips of His priest, with hand uplifted in absolution: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

"Arise and walk," was said of old over the suppliant paralytic on his bed of pain, as into his dull eyes there came the glimmer of hope and faith, and to his feeble limbs rejuvenated strength. So it has been down the decades of the centuries, as the identical words have been uttered over the palsied souls of men, who have arisen strengthened and purified by the outflowing of Calvary's Blood over their souls. In the Old Law the sprink-

ling of the blood of the Testament was an application of the blood of the victim, and they who thus partook of the benefits of the covenant did so through the power of the sacrificial blood. So now in the New Dispensation we are sprinkled with the Blood of the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world, and this ruddy stream flows upon our weak and palsied souls through the great Sacrament of Penance, typified by the healing of the paralytic. Alas, men and women more palsied in spirit than the poor sick man at Capharnaum was in body, stay away and ache and suffer from their infirmities of the soul, rather than kneel down in humility and sincerity, saying to God's anointed, as David did of old: "Have mercy upon Me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities. Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." No tongue can tell the joy of the prodigal who comes home at last to cast himself into the welcoming embrace of the Father, and to be pardoned and received with tenderness and love.

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